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DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NOV. 1, 1923 NO. 143

Feature Mystery Story

"I'LL WIN I'LL WIN"

by

ARTHUR B. REEVE

and

MARGARET WILSON REEVE

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. VI NOVEMBER 1, 1923 No. 143

ISSUED TWICE A MONTH

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Published by Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 166 West 23d St., New York.

Harry E. Wolff, President; L. F. Wilzin, Treasurer; Charles E. Nylander, Secretary.

LU. SENARENS, Editor.

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Subscription Price: Domestic, Single Copy, 10 Cents; Domestic, Yearly, $2.50; Canada, $2.75; Foreign, $3.00.

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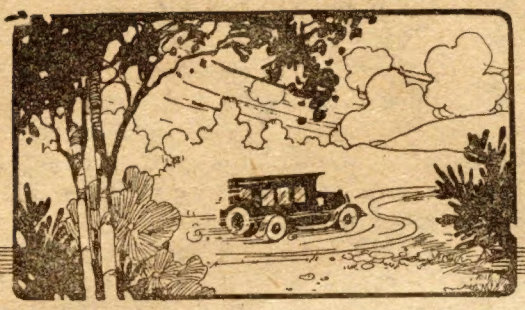

"I'LL WIN! I'LL WIN!"

by Arthur B. Reeve & Margaret Wilson Reeve

SKIDDING as it swung through a huge gate, the car startled me into consciousness again.

It was with difficulty that I opened my eyes, the lids seemed so heavy. I rubbed them vigorously. I felt the glow from the friction and opened them wide, shutting them again just as quickly. Then I blinked rapidly several times.

But still that feeling of unreality hung over me. I saw my pumps below the tan silk stockings, as though they were miles away. Were they really mine? I moved my feet, and I saw the pumps move, too. Of course they were mine.

I felt a little shiver run down my spine. I was beginning to think more clearly. Why was I here? Why didn't I know where I was?

I put my hand in my bag and touched an envelope. That envelope suggested the reason for my presence in this softly upholstered limousine. But it seemed only a few minutes ago that I had come down the steps of my apartment house to enter this car. Now we were miles out in the country. It couldn't be that I had fallen asleep. What was it?

I knew now that I must be in some private estate—my destination, most likely. But how did I get there so quickly? I looked at the chauffeur sitting unconcernedly at the wheel. He seemed comfortable and not asking himself any foolish questions about the trip. I was plainly frightened, and I called to him wildly through the tube:

"Driver! Driver! Are we nearly there?"

He slowed down slightly and turned to me with a smile. He touched his hat respectfully. "Yes, miss; there's the house, just beyond those trees."

"Well, what time is it?"

With a shake of his head he called back: "Sorry, miss, but my watch has stopped." He smiled again, but I couldn't help thinking his words were not as frank as his smile.

I looked about and exclaimed with an involuntary start. Some distance ahead loomed a house. Was it my foggy mentality or the inability of my eyes to focus properly? As I looked at that pile of dark stone

silhouetted against a grove of old pines it seemed to possess a sinister vitality.

What was it—a mortar mixture turned out by Mephistopheles, possessed of an evil enchantment that held each big brown stone in its hard and cruel tenacity? For all the world that house looked like a thing of hate!

The central section was two stories high, two windows cut into the wall of the second floor on either side of the great entrance below. About midway, in the centre of the building, was a long, narrow window, most likely lighting up a winding staircase. On the first floor was a wide door—and no windows. Wings had been added on either side, and where these wings joined the house were towers, higher than the house itself or the wings, which were still lower than the main central pile.

Through my dulled vision it looked like an evil head. The towers suggested horns.

Only once before had I ever seen anything just like it. That also had been on the North Shore. It had been a houseboat in the harbor of Narrowport, anchored for a season, and its windows were arranged so grotesquely that when the wind swung the bow northwest it seemed to me, coming up the harbor in my little motor-boat, like the head of a huge sea serpent, green and white, waiting patiently to devour me.

I looked at that door intently and shuddered. I turned quickly to look at the chauffeur. He seemed quite calm and unaffected.

We came gradually to a stop, not directly in front of the house. The road did not wind up in front of it, but around at the side. Nevertheless he stopped. I gathered up my handbag and stepped out of the car as the chauffeur opened the door. He took my arm deferentially, and I was about to remonstrate at his excessive attention. Instead, I felt glad of the service. I felt giddy. My legs almost refused to support me.

"Why—why—this is silly of me!" I stammered. "I must be car sick for the first time in my life, or faint. It has come over me so suddenly. I felt well enough this morning when I was getting ready." I looked helplessly at the man, who responded only with another encouraging smile.

"You'll be all right in a minute, miss. Professor Mentino will help you. He will help anybody who needs him, if he takes a notion to them."

I looked at him with a question in my eyes, then turned away slightly as I felt the hot tears of anxiety under my lids. I must be all right for the important night of my new play. It meant so much for me, for the producer, Oppenstein, so much for my future.

Steadying myself against the side of the car, I took out a little mirror. I was shocked. My face seemed altered, older. Dark circles were under the eyes, a haggardness had crept in where my youth should have glowed. I looked ill. What would Oppenstein say?

Swallowing hard at my dilemma, I tried to account for the change in my looks. Then for the first time memory, or lack of memory, brought me face to face with the fact that I had remembered nothing from the moment when I entered this closed car until I was nearing this gorgeously dismal abode.

"I must have been ill—a long time—to make me as weak as this," I suggested to the driver, hoping he would say something that would explain my queer sensations.

But he was reticent. "I was busy with the road and traffic. I didn't notice anything wrong."

Inwardly I doubted. Outwardly, with a nod as he indicated the house, I took his arm again for support, and we went silently over the pine-needle-strewn lawn toward the door that now I instinctively dreaded.

My mind could not have been working just right, either. At any other time the first significance of danger would have incited me to flee. But that door drew me, actually drew me as if by an impish power of the perverse.

I had an idea that I must see this thing through, no matter what game of life was played. To myself I kept repeating: "Comedy—or tragedy? Comedy—or tragedy?" How ridiculous for me to be talking—aloud, too, incoherently, and before this man!

I stopped a minute to rest. I felt like laughing, then like bursting into an abandon of tears

Rubbing the toes of my shoes in the needles recalled memories of how I used to do the same thing when I was visiting Aunt Cassie at her old home after my mother died. I would rub the soles until they shone, then would slide on the needles. I even tried to slide now and stopped only when the driver looked at me in perplexity. I must try to think with some continuity, act with some dignity. All the time, too, I was getting nearer and nearer that door.

I really became agitated when I stepped upon the low stone step. I paused, opened my bag, looked in to see if indeed I had received the letter which I remembered putting there. There it was. I knew its contents by heart:

"My Dear Miss Rutledge: Howard Penwarden tells me you collapsed last night at the opening of 'Gold and Goldlocks.'

"Was I not right yesterday afternoon when I warned you of your weakness? I offered to help you then, and I still offer, if you will consider favorably the request I made.

"Howard is heartbroken over your failure, is begging me now to write this letter of sympathy to you. Can you not reconsider your decision? I love Howard as my own son. That is the reason why I am interested.

"If you agree, I will make you a wonderful success. If not—well, there have been many falling stars since the world began.

"Should you care to talk it over with me again, please use the car which I am sending around at nine this morning with the driver bearing this note. He will see that you arrive safely at my place on the North Shore.

"At any rate, the time will not be wasted. The country air will help you. But fresh air and change of scene are not all, my dear little girl.

"Cordially,
"Rafael Mentino."

I was afraid of Professor Mentino, afraid to go in, more afraid to stay out. I recalled my instinctive ear when I had met him at the Hotel Vandermore yesterday afternoon.

Howard Penwarden had many queer and fascinating friends. But the old professor was the strangest type I had ever met. His eyes had seemed to burn into my soul.

I was so nervous now I trembled. Then I thought of my collapse at the theatre the night before. I had started all right. But suddenly it seemed as if my tongue were paralyzed. I couldn't sing! I tried to dance. My feet would not move! Then, flinging my arms out wildly, I sank to the stage; then the curtain, back of the merciful curtain—a failure.

I thought now how kind Ralph and Aunt Cassie had been. Ralph, dear old Ralph, was the first to reach me, with a doctor from the audience. I could hear him still. "Doctor, I can't understand it! It's not natural. She seemed in perfect health. She has always been so successful before!"

And the doctor. "H'm! It is strange. Pulse normal. Temperature, too. Nothing wrong. Just a—collapse. These modern girls—hard to tell about them. Nervous system strained to the breaking point might account for it."

Ralph was worried and showed it when Jake Oppenstein, the producer, came in. Oppenstein had been philosophical. "I'm sorry, Jobyna. There'll be another chance. I've told them"—pointing out toward the audience—"that you come on against the advice of your physician not to disappoint them. But it was too much for you. They cheered you at that. You've been working too hard. Go home and rest. Don't worry. There's no performance until to-morrow night. Just rest."

Aunt Cassie and Ralph took me home. "Just rest," echoed Aunt Cassie, then to Ralph: "I'm going to take her to some quiet cathedral for prayer and strength."

I looked at the knocker on the door and smiled to myself a forced smile. This was far from a cathedral, and Aunt Cassie did not even know that I was out.

My heart palpitated a vigorous message not to enter. But my ambition or success, the desire to please my manager, my vanity made my mind conquer the natural impulse. I turned toward the door again and lifted

the heavy brass knocker. The moment I let it fall I felt irretrievably lost.

The door opened immediately. A Japanese servant bowed obsequiously and ushered me into a small reception-room in the front.

The air of the place was redolent of incense. It hung heavy and depressing about me.

This was a queer abode. Fundamentally the furniture was exquisite. But wealth and a perverted taste had veneered the room, veneered it with ill-chosen, exotic, fantastic objects collected from all quarters of the earth.

My throat was parched. I asked for a drink. It was not precisely soothing when the Japanese passed me a wonderfully wrought antique drinking mug of silver, in the shape of a dragon's head, with rubies as eyes. I laid it down, and my hand brushed the side of a mummy in a case. Grotesque faces, weird animals seemed to smile and leer at me from every corner of the room. I was uncomfortable, and I felt the perspiration oozing from me.

Soon I heard a shuffling in the hall. It stopped at the open doorway. Somehow I dreaded to look up. Finally I did so, compelled by courtesy.

Rafael Mentino stood before me in a long black gown that fell in dull folds to the floor. On his feet were unusual sandals of alligator skin, the toes raised slightly and ending in sinister serpent heads. I shivered at them, and as I raised my eyes I noticed the long, slender white hands slowly rubbing each other with a peculiar serpentine suggestion.

Then I saw his eyes again, magnetic, compelling. Did you ever see eyes so deep, so cool, so full of inviting promises that quite naturally you would let yourself go, would experience the same sensation as, naked, one parts the cool water of a pool on a July afternoon and feels the water close coolly about the body?

Suddenly my eyes closed. They were heavy. It seemed just as suddenly they opened. But how long I had had them closed I could not tell.

I saw a slow, pleased smile pass over Mentino's face as my gaze drank in those fascinating eyes. Strange, my fears had all left me. I felt better; felt stronger than ever.

I heard him speaking in a low, quiet tone. "Ah, Miss Rutledge, you did not believe me yesterday afternoon when I told you I saw failure! I knew you needed help, need it badly now, to go on to-night—your last chance for success. Are you ready to let me help you?" He bowed gravely.

"But, Professor Mentino, why must I marry Howard Penwarden to get the help that you say you alone can give me? Can't you help me without that?"

He stood up, straight and tall. Slowly he shook his head. "See? You young folks are all alike. You want everything. You give nothing. What is wrong with Howard? He is my closest friend. He likes all the things I like, even you!" He smiled a leer of a smile.

"But I don't love him, professor. I do love some one else. What better reason can a girl have than that?"

I could not help the starting tears, but he chose not to see them. "Why did you come to me, then?" he asked coldly.

"Because I thought you might help me—might be kind to me." My voice sank lower with each syllable, expressive of the state of my hopes.

"You want to succeed, don't you?"

I nodded eagerly.

"Howard is brilliant, wealthy. You seem to like to be with him. What more do you want?" He shrugged.

"Love!"

"But that comes with success. I know." He muttered the last word. "Are you willing to give up love now for a future?"

I held my breath for a minute and thought. I could see Ralph's cheerful, handsome face looking with merry eyes full of love into mine. Ralph was my chiidhood lover. I had known Ralph as long as I could remember. For the last three years he had been begging me to marry him. But I was busy "getting on" in my profession. I was afraid that marriage would be too exciting, would demand too much of my time. Yet how could I give up Ralph for one for whom I did not even care? I wondered at

my own temerity in coming out here, in even contemplating such a marriage.

"Was last night easy to forget?" Mentino asked it with the directness of a psychologist.

"Easy to forget? Oh, God, no!" I covered my face and wept bitterly.

Again I held my breath and thought. I could picture that sea of faces looking up at me—consternation, perplexity, scorn. I could see my name in lights before the theatre. They were taking it down. How could I forget the way I felt last night? It was too terrible ever to leave my memory.

In a frenzy of chagrin and disappointment I knelt at his feet. With clasped hands I implored him to help me. "I—I'll marry Howard! I'll do anything you ask. Only let me go on to-night; let me succeed! Let me redeem myself with Mr. Oppenstein, save the opera—myself!"

"I'm glad to see you can think, Miss Rutledge. So you will marry Howard. Good! Good!" He rubbed his hands as I sat on the floor in a whirl of chaotic thoughts at my decision.

There were other steps in the hall. I looked up, expecting to get to my chair quickly. I did not have a chance. Howard Penwarden had burst into the room with a rush of happiness.

"Jobyna! I heard! I couldn't stay out another minute." Howard took my hand, leading me toward a chair.

I studied him now with a new interest. He was slender, with dark, curly hair and a deep olive skin. Bright, piercing eyes of deep brown were now gazing fondly into mine. I lowered them in confusion.

Many afternoons during the last few months I had been with Howard. He had interested me in many strange things, in cults that had taken us to teas in the village and uptown, innumerable lectures on the mind, spiritism, the theories of Freud. He seemed brilliant and distinguished. But I had never been the slightest bit in love with him. His repeated proposals I had dismissed with a smile, had given them no serious thought. The last time he proposed I had said, "Howard, this is the fifteenth, I believe. Get a string of twenty beads, Coué beads. With such optimism you should win with the twentieth."

He sat on the arm of my chair now. "Jobyna, when is the little ceremony going to take place? Don't make me wait long, dear!"

I shuddered at his nearness. In what a predicament I found myself!

"Make it this afternoon." Mentino had spoken quickly. "Be a bride at your big success to-night!"

"Oh! Not so soon, Howard! I'm not ready. I have, oh, so many things to do and to buy first."

I was thinking of Aunt Cassie with whom I had lived since my mother died. What would she say to this hurried marriage? She did not even know of these visits. To me it already seemed ages since Howard took me yesterday to see the professor at his room in the quiet residence hotel in the city. He had wanted me to meet this eminent psychologist. He had told me of his wonderful powers, his wealth and his present retirement. I had not liked the man from the start. His presence, even yesterday, had inspired me with awe and fright. I feared him when he told me I was to be a failure. I did not believe him. I merely smiled. Even then he had impressed on me the offer that if I would accept Howard he would overcome my weakness, make me a star.

"But I am a star," I had insisted. "I have no weakness."

He had merely smiled skeptically, that smile that struck terror into me. He had repeated the offer. Then I refused decisively. But when I left with Howard I had an instinctive fear of impending trouble, of danger hanging near me, of a darkness in the future.

My failure was the realization of these miserable feelings.

Howard leaned over me tenderly when I asked him only to wait. Of course I was flattered by the man's love. What girl is not? He did not answer, but seemed thoughtful.

Mentino was not so silent. "To have the success I promised you the ceremony must take place before you leave here." He folded his arms and scowled.

"But I have promised to give Aunt Cassie the afternoon, and, besides, Mr. Oppenstein is going to call me up to tell me whether they are making any changes in the opera. I must rest before to-night."

An instant and Howard's arms were about me. He lifted me from the chair. I could feel his lips seeking mine. "Jobyna—please! I love you. I can't let you go—now. I'll have the minister here in an hour—less. Only say the word. Then Oppenstein and, darling, triumph and rest in my arms in the bridal suite at the Colonnade!"

He was smothering me with kisses. His lips were so tightly pressed on mine I could not breathe. I was suffocated. Oh, God! to be out of this house!

I could see the old man standing in the background, watching my unwilling wooing with a curious smile. The love-making in itself was disgusting to me. But to have an observer, and such a one; it was intolerable.

I struggled in Howard's arms. "Howard, go away. Leave me alone!" I squirmed out of his embrace with desperate strength. My breath was coming fast. I felt as if I were about to faint again.

"How many encores do you expect looking like that?" Mentino came up with a long mirror. I saw my own face peering at me in horror, white, terror-stricken, soul-sick. "You—a twinkling star! You will fail when you sing and dance the next time!"

Mentino seemed actually to enjoy my discomfiture. I drew back broken, ill at ease. I seemed dizzy. I clasped my hands in anguish. Tears were streaming down my face. I begged Howard to intercede, to implore the professor to help me.

"Surely, Howard," I cried, "I have the right to be won like other girls. Can't we be—just ordinary sweethearts? I'll marry you—yes—but give me time—a few days, please!"

I laid my hand on his shoulder in my anxiety. He misunderstood. "You are mine—now! You have promised and I'll have no backing out when you leave me. I love you; I need you; I want you. You will love me—and be my wife before that performance!"

His body was trembling violently in the intensity of his emotions. He pressed me close to him.

I don't know what would have happened, but Mentino took his arm. With a cry of fear more than hope I sprang away, ran through the room, dashed for the door. The mechanism was simple. It opened easily.

I was out in the open. I was breathing the fresh air again.

"Help! Help!" I called.

No one came.

I ran over the pine-needle-strewn bit of lawn in the direction over the knoll where I had left the car. Thank Heaven! It was still there. By it the chauffeur was standing, seemingly examining the tires. He straightened up as soon as he saw me, opening the door.

I asked him nothing; I jumped in. "Drive me home—quick!"

He nodded. Out of the long rear window I could see Howard Penwarden and Mentino. It seemed that Mentino was signaling to the driver, who answered.

"Don't let them come up! Don't! Please!" I was hoarse. "Take me home!"

Again the driver smiled that smile with its frankness that I knew was false. The car moved faster.

I knew nothing more until we came to a sudden halt. I looked out. There was the apartment I had left, how many hours ago? I got out. I managed to get up the steps to the elevator.

The first thing I saw intelligibly was dear Aunt Cassie bending over me.

"Call—Ralph!" was all I could murmur.

Her motherly face showed her joy at my coming to. "Where have you been, dear?"

"When Ralph—comes—I'll tell everything. Dear Aunt Cassie! I need you. Get Ralph; tell him to come right away!"

She left the room. I could see that she was terribly worried. How good she had always been!

Aunt Cassie was my father's only sister and had been like a mother to me since I had come East. She had never married, and when my father died she was left prac-

tically alone. Since my mother's death she had seemed to live just for me. Her wealth had shielded her from the worries and wickedness of the world; she was a woman of the old school, devout in religion and orthodox, but with much common sense and humor. My profession had reduced Aunt Cassie to a state of constant shock. It was so different from anything in the life she had led.

I could hear Aunt Cassie over the telephone importuning Ralph to hurry. While I waited for her I saw the morning papers on the table. What had the critics said? I swallowed hard and forced myself to turn to the dramatic news.

In large type in the *Recorder* I read: "Jobyna Rutledge Collapses in Second Act," and the subheading, "Producer Oppenstein Explains Swoon in Spectacle 'Dance of the Stars' Due to Illness.' Skimming over it, some lines stood out more terribly than others.

My favorite woman critic wrote: "Pretty little Jobyna Rutledge, the new stage beauty and dancer, fainted just as the portals of fame were opening for her last night. It was a tragedy to me, for I have always loved her. She is inimitable on her toes, a sprite, a fluff of thistledown. I wept with her. It came in the second act, at her big opportunity. She looked dazed, uncertain, pitiful, and then swooned. She was so tiny, so beautiful, that I felt like climbing on the stage to comfort her as one would a sick child. To-night she tries again. It takes courage to do that. I am going to be there to see if she makes good. There has not been another show this season that I would place higher on my sign-post than 'Gold and Goldilocks.'"

I flung the papers away from me in desperation. The big mirror reflected an almost unfamiliar face when I looked, or was it a wraith of myself? I was so white and solemn. I tried to smile. It was a forlorn effort. It made me think of Lillian Gish in "Broken Blossoms." It was a poor little twisted smile.

I was bending over looking at this changeling of myself when I felt two strong arms slide under mine, myself turned about and my chin raised gently.

It was good to have Ralph. He gave me more confidence than I had had all day. I had been studying my face so intently that I had not even seen him in the mirror approaching.

Aunt Cassie stood in the doorway. "That does me good, Jobyna! You ought to see your face—now!" She nodded at Ralph. She had always approved of Ralph. "You children must sit down, now. I want to hear, and I want to say a few things, too."

Ralph and I were on the big window seat. "Now, Jo," he coaxed, "tell me where you were, what made you ill again."

I shuddered at the recollection. "I don't know where I was—out on Long Island somewhere. I went to see a friend of Howard Penwarden." I started to tell of Professor Mentino.

"You don't know anything about getting there and getting back? Are you sure?" I shook my head dolefully at Aunt Cassie. "I never heard of such a thing, did you, Ralph?"

Ralph was bending forward. "I take it she has been 'put out' with something. It's happened before." Then he thought back on the story I had been telling. "You met him yesterday? Where? Who took you there?"

"Yes. I went to his rooms at the Vandermore with Howard. Howard said the professor was a recluse to most people. It flattered me. My interest was aroused and I wanted to see him, right after the rehearsal yesterday. He is a scientist, lives shut up on his big estate on Long Island. Howard told me most people feared him, even hated him, but that he was really only a lonely old man. He has no visitors from the village where he lives, no communication with the village, no banking there, apparently no marketing. All the servants are strange, strangers. But he must be wealthy. The house and the things in it showed that."

"Jobyna Rutledge! What would your mother have said? To go see such an old reprobate as that, alone!" Aunt Cassie, like many good people, fairly sputtered in indignation. "I wish I had my hands on

Howard Penwarden. I would—shake him! Letting you meet people like that! The very idea!"

"Oh, Aunt Cassie," I remonstrated, "Howard is interested in science, psychology, many things."

"Yes! A regular dabbler in isms and isn'ts! Well, he needn't be interested in you any more. He's always carting you off to these Greenwich Villagy teas and things. He can stay away. Don't you think so, Ralph?" she appealed in her dilemma over me.

I laughed. And it startled me. I had thought I would never laugh spontaneously again. "You're a German diplomat, Aunt Cassie. What do you suppose Ralph will say? Defend a rival? Don't worry. I've had enough this morning of my Egyptian prince."

"Egyptian prince?" Aunt Cassie was wide-eyed.

"Yes. Howard believes his is the reincarnation of some Egyptian prince, that I was his princess in that other life. He says that is why his complexion is so olive and his hair and eyes so dark."

"Hokum!" Ralph laughed outright. "Reincarnation—bosh! The trouble with Penwarden is excessive smoking of Tutankhamen cigarettes. Egyptian tobacco makes him jaundiced!"

Aunt Cassie shook her head. "It's his liver; something wrong with his liver. Oh, I hate him!"

"But, Jo, tell me about it all, from the time you went to see this gazabo yesterday until Aunt Cassie called me up this morning. I think it's darn funny—not funny, you know, but——"

Ralph was holding my hand. I felt as though some force was flowing from him to me. I suppose I must have colored a bit. For an instant I raised my eyes to his. His love seemed to fire me with courage—and hope.

As I finished telling my story the door buzzer sounded. Aunt Cassie left me with Ralph. She did not fancy visitors.

"What's that infernal racket at the door? Aunt Cassie seems to have a fuss on her hands." She had been gone only a few minutes. Ralph moved toward the hall of the suite and I followed.

A strange woman, in red and yellow and green, all gay colors, and spangles, coins of gold about her, was gesticulating wildly. "The young miss, please, the young one! I have a message!"

"This is the second time I've told you to go away this morning. There's trouble enough without you gypsies getting her all excited with your foolishness. Now go away; don't come back."

Aunt Cassie was trying to close the door, but the picturesque visitor had put her foot over the sill as soon as it had been opened. Now her ample body was a sufficient wedge to keep it wide open enough to give her a view of the hall. Her face lighted as she saw us. Her earrings jingled and her white teeth shone.

She called to me. "You will live long—live long!" The gypsy extended her hands appealingly. "Let me talk to you, please!"

But Aunt Cassie was determined. She did not believe in reincarnation, but this might be the witch of Endor. She took my arm, threw her light sweater over my ears, pushed me back into the sunny living-room, with a nod to Ralph.

"You have many enemies! Let me tell!"

It was not exactly reassuring. But I heard no more. Ralph had the woman in the outer hall and the door shut.

I was alone again with Aunt Cassie. "Mr. Oppenstein and I agree on one thing. There will be no more visitors. You must rest." Aunt Cassie sat down in a chair by the door as if to keep vigil. "Ralph says for you not even to go to the theatre until he has seen Mr. Oppenstein."

"All right. I'll be good. Only, while I'm resting, tell me about mother and father again. I love to listen."

"Well, you should. Your mother was the dearest woman I ever knew. She knew you always wanted to sing and to dance. She saw your ability when you were a little tot the others called 'Happy.' She helped to train you; got the best teachers on the Coast. Then, just as you began to show promise, she died. That was when I brought you East."

I nodded. I remembered my mother's love and help only too well. "What about father?"

Aunt Cassie had idealized her only brother. "Galen Rutledge died while they were summering in the Tyrol, a short time after you were born. You were a tiny baby when your mother brought you back to America and went out to her old home in California, at Berkeley. Ralph's parents were your mother's best friends out here, as you know. Many a scrape you children got in." Aunt Cassie smiled.

"Yes. I was always getting into things, and he had to get us out."

Aunt Cassie continued: "Your mother was never quite satisfied about the circumstances of the death of your father. It happened after a tedious and exhaustive stretch of laboratory work which took him to Europe and finally to Vienna. There the results greatly pleased him. He told your mother that he had found what he sought. But he never told her just what it was. He said it would make their fortunes, though Galen had enough as it was.

"The next week he was killed. Three scientists had gone mountain climbing. Two in the party were killed. The guide said it was an unfortunate accident. But it never satisfied your mother. When she went to his laboratory in Vienna, examined his papers, she could find no results, no notes, nothing to show for all the months of experimenting. She thought the notes might have been lost in the fall down the ravine. It was so indefinite and distressing. But your mother could do nothing. There was nothing but to accept it."

"Poor dad! He was almost like myself—only I didn't die. Just as success came he was killed. And just as my big chance comes—I collapse. They say daughters take after their fathers. I think it's true." I felt melancholy.

"You are talking nonsense. You have no right to talk about failure until after tonight. Only twenty, and the star of the most spectacular opera of the season, a fine man for a sweetheart—and you talk about failure. Child, you have the best part of your life before you."

I was glad to see Ralph come in again. "I've seen Oppenstein," he said in a tone that I could not argue against. "He suggests a rehearsal at the theatre this aternoon for the song and the solo dance. The musicians will be there by the time we arrive. He can't be there himself, but Aunt Cassie and I will be with you."

Again the feeling of fear at the mere thought of dancing that dance which I had believed I knew so perfectly. I had to conquer a trembling of my limbs even before I could leave the room to get ready.

I was quiet all the way to the theatre. I felt as if something was at my throat that made me almost incapable of speech. Aunt Cassie had one of my hands in hers. Every time I looked at Ralph it seemed as if his eyes were broadcasting cheer. I was angry at my own incapacity. I felt pulled hither and yon, unable to help myself.

"I'm not tired; let me start right away," I said in a resigned way as I rejoined Ralph after changing to the light gown in which I rehearsed.

He gave the signal to the musicians. The prelude to the dance was almost finished. Came my cue to go on.

I danced well enough until I reached the centre of the stage. Then again surged over me the faintness and nausea I had experienced the night before at the opening. I could not move my lips. My limbs felt heavy, lifeless. Out in front sat Aunt Cassie. I saw her start back in fright as I sank to the stage. Ralph caught me up.

He carried me to my dressing-room. "Ralph," I moaned, "I am miserable. What will they think?"

He laid me down gently on my couch, and I cried softly to myself. "Cry it out, Jo; those tears will do you good!"

I glanced quickly into my mirror. I was aghast. If anything, I looked worse than I had this morning at Mentino's. I shut my eyes tight, refused to look again at myself. Then I heard Aunt Cassie whisper, "How is she?"

"Fine!"

"Fine!" I almost screamed it back in vexation at Ralph. "I never felt worse in my life! Do you know what it means to be a

failure—a failure even in rehearsal?" I resented it, resorted to all the petulance of youth thwarted.

But Ralph was elated. At least his optimism was encouraging. "Next time you won't fail—you *can't!*"

I looked curiously at him. "You're an inspiration, Ralph. I'm glad Mr. Oppenstein wasn't here. You make me almost want to try again to-night!"

"That's it. Fine! Sure thing. You'll succeed, too!"

"Ralph, you are a dear!"

I saw that he was looking at the door. There was some one there. "Come!" he called.

The gypsy I had seen at the apartment entered.

"You—again?" gasped Aunt Cassie.

Ralph raised a restraining hand. "Trust me, Aunt Cassie. There is something I want to experiment with—nothing that will hurt Jobyna, something that may help her."

Aunt Cassie was so nervous that she hovered constantly about the gypsy. But the gypsy did not seem to care. She turned to Aunt Cassie. "Hot water and towels for the young lady."

Aunt Cassie was too surprised to resent the order. Ralph's assurance had shaken her. "I—I'll see about them!"

As for me, I was mightily interested in the whole proceeding. One of the assistants at the theatre supplied Aunt Cassie with the hot water and towels. The gypsy leaned over and smiled sympathetically at me. "Ma'mzelle, please close the eyes!"

I did so. I felt a gentle hand brushing back my hair and the hot towels applied to my face. Then she spread over my face like jam a soft clay. It did not hurt; only it felt strange.

I heard Aunt Cassie exclaim: "Oh, Lord, have mercy! What have you let that woman do to her? Ralph! What is it? Are you yourself, Jobyna?"

I raised my hands and wiggled my fingers. It seemed as if every bit of my face was being subjected to a gentle electric shock. Every pore responded.

It must have been that way many minutes when I heard the gypsy say to Ralph: "It's all dry."

More hot water, a massage with cream, and she told me to open my eyes. Ralph cried: "Look, Jo!" I took the mirror from him.

I jumped off the couch and sang a few lines of the song I was to sing that night. My voice rang clear. I danced in my glee. My beauty had come back to me!

Aunt Cassie's face was a joke. "Oh, Lord, I thank Thee! A miracle!" Then she saw the gypsy rubbing her hands, smiling. That was too much. "It's not natural, Ralph. It's the work of the devil!"

Ralph laughed outright. A glance from him and the gypsy picked up her things and departed as silently as she had come.

A few minutes later we left for our apartment.

Either Aunt Cassie or Ralph were with me every minute until the performance. All I heard was encouraging remarks. Every time I saw myself in a mirror I pinched myself to see if I were real. I wanted to know if I was as radiant as the mirror showed.

"Jo, you must keep saying, 'I'll win! I'll win!'"

"All right, Ralph; I'll win! I'll win!"

It was too much for Aunt Cassie. "Prayer is the best thing. Pray for strength, Jobyna, and believe that the Lord will give it to you!"

"But, Aunt Cassie," defended Ralph at her tone, "what I'm telling Jo is only psychology."

"It may be psychology, but Jesus was the first psychologist. You can't get around that, Ralph." Aunt Cassie delivered her dictum with finality. "You can say, 'I'll win! I'll win!' But I'll say, 'God help her! God help her!'"

We laughed. The atmosphere, believe it or not, seemed charged with success.

"Go on to-night, as usual." Ralph was reluctantly leaving. "I'll be in the box with Aunt Cassie. Don't even look at any one but Aunt Cassie and me."

I promised.

Aunt Cassie and I went to the theatre after a light supper. I saw no one in the

dressing-room except my maid, the manager, and Aunt Cassie.

It is true I winced at the looks of sympathy I received and squared my shoulders each time. I was full of fight and determination. I felt physically fit. Oh, God, if it only would continue! I saw whispering and shrugging of shoulders. But I took offense at nothing. I was determined not to do so. I felt that there was a general air of expectancy among the cast that I would not succeed again. I made my mind determine to rise above it.

During the first act I had little to do and everything passed off beautifully. So it had the night before. I could not take much comfort out of that. But I did not let that affect me.

The audience had cheered my reappearance. But I could not help thinking that out there, too, there was that atmosphere of expectant failure.

Just before the second act Ralph sent me a card. On it he had hastily written, "I'll win! I'll win!" And Aunt Cassie had written under it, "Pray, too, dear."

I smiled. It was the only message I received, and I thought it queer. Always, before, many people had tried to see me between the acts. I pressed Ralph's card close to me and slipped it in the bosom of my costume as I changed hastily for the second act.

The music started. I took my position. I noticed every little item about my costume. All was correct. First I was to sing and then came the dance.

Now!

I ran lightly on, a little nymph dancing in the woods, yearning to be a star. I threw my soul into it. I was that nymph. I had ambition to rise, to soar, to fly, to settle finally in the firmament above. I forgot the audience in the intensity of my desire, forgot my fears. I just sang and danced and yearned. I was possessed of an ecstasy of joy. The idea to redeem myself had given me added strength, an added agility and nimbleness.

There was the Great God waiting to hear my petition. I sang my song pleadingly, easily, after the first little dance. In song I begged Him to take me up in the sky where the stars twinkled. I aspired to be better, higher, nobler. I wanted to have a soul!

It was at the point where I flung myself prostrate and cried, "Nymphs have no souls!"

Then the rich voice answered: "Soul and success come with striving, with pain and adversity. Can you bear all things, endure all things?"

"Yes!" I cried aloud in my ecstasy and I danced as I had never danced before. With wild abandon I skipped about the stage as the coveted message, "You shall have your desire!" thrilled from the sky above me.

Then came the dramatic moments, the dance in the storm amid flashes of lightning and crashing thunder, the awakening of love and my betrayal, the flight and stoning from the village, to the last wonderful spectacle of all.

I was in a deep forest. Stars were twinkling above me. I was dying of hunger and thirst. But I had a soul! I had suffered. Always my eyes were on the heavens. My garments were rags.

Suddenly, from above, boomed the voice: "It is time!"

I felt strength flowing into my tired and weary muscles. I stood up, a rapt look on my face, arms uplifted. A star shot across the sky.

Over my shoulders now dropped a drapery of shimmering folds of silk. It gleamed and shone with the lights and iridescent trimming. New vigor came to me. I danced joyously about everything. I kissed the green grass good-by, the trees, the flowers. My lover appeared in the distance, was again enraputred, rushed forward to grasp me. But with a kiss blown lightly to him I was wafted to the stars.

When I reached my dressing-room after the many curtain calls, Oppenstein himself was fairly dancing. "I knew you could do it; I knew it; I knew it!"

Outside I could still hear the audience clamoring. Tears of happiness were coursing down my cheeks. Aunt Cassie was bursting with joy. Ralph kissed me before everybody. Everywhere were flowers and heaps of messages pouring in.

The third act passed quickly. It was difficult for me to slip away from admirers and friends after the performance. Ralph, Aunt Cassie and Oppenstein managed it adroitly, however.

Ralph had his car across from the stage entrance. As he pulled out into the line of traffic from the curb the lights glowed intimately on the delighted throng leaving the theatre.

"Look, Jo." Ralph pointed to my name in lights above the entrance. "It's going to stay there!"

I smiled. But at that instant I saw something that froze my answer. "Ralph! There's that chauffeur! He's waiting for some one. Let's watch!" I was trembling with excitement.

The chauffeur had left his car along the curb and was entering a cigar store. Ralph pulled in where a car was leaving and we jumped out and hurried back to look in the other car.

There were two or three packages on the floor with the name on them, "Howard Penwarden."

"That bird! I'll bet he's going out to Mentino's. Are you game to follow, Jo? I'm prepared for anything."

I could not say the same just now. I said nothing.

Ralph sniffed as he stuck his head in the other car. "There's a heavy odor in it, yet—— No wonder you didn't know anything, Jo." He leaned over and looked at the heater on the floor of the car. Then he smelled it. "Some one placed an overpowering drug on that heater connected with the exhaust. The fumes caused by the heat were too much for you in the back of a closed car. When these packages were shoved in some one, without thinking, struck the lever, turning the heat on again. There must have been some of the powder left. Hurry. Let's get back to my car. I want to follow this one. Don't let that driver see us."

"Yes! I wish I had that Howard Penwarden here. I'd tell him a few things." Aunt Cassie was militant. She bustled as if she would have shaken him.

Ralph smiled, but said nothing. "It will take more than words for Howard Penwarden," I observed. "What did you mean, Ralph, when you said you were prepared for anything?"

"This!" Under the rear seat Ralph showed us a gun and a number of cartridges, a queer gun and cartridges, large, strangely shaped, not like any that I had ever seen before. He picked up the gun. "This will aid us to-night, Aunt Cassie."

"Not—all. The spirit of the Lord will battle for me!" It might have been sacrilege if I said it, but not for Aunt Cassie. She meant it, believed it. I couldn't help thinking how far I had strayed.

"There he goes back! Penwarden's coming out of the lobby. Now, Ralph, don't lose them in traffic," I cried.

They were off. Neither Penwarden nor the chauffeur saw us nor evidently suspected any such thing as that they were followed, for Penwarden spoke a few words to him, sniffed, opened the windows, then settled back in the car as if for a long ride.

We followed carefully. It was thrilling. Several times we almost lost them, but Aunt Cassie had her eye on that one red tail light and was able to point it out unerringly. Traffic officers were few at that time of night, and we soon were past the city limits.

We didn't follow too closely and warn them by that. But I gasped every time I saw a crossroad, for fear they might discover us. Through several familiar villages we passed until finally Penwarden's car turned down a narrow road off the turnpike.

Now we had to use the utmost care. Ralph dimmed his lights and poked ahead slowly. Suddenly the red light ahead disappeared.

"Would you know the gate?" Ralph asked.

"Yes, I think so. Go ahead." I peered out eagerly. "Yes, there it is!"

"I don't hear that other car. It's mighty quiet. I think we'd better not ride very far in here."

Ralph ran his car into some shrubbery. We stepped out and a moment later were hurrying up the driveway.

Ralph leaned forward. "Here, Jo, take

this. You might need it." Aunt Cassie gasped when she saw the tiny automatic. I dropped it into the inside pocket of my evening wrap. The gravity of it all now, the mysteriousness of Mentino, and this suggestion of physical danger made Aunt Cassie strangely silent.

We felt our way on till suddenly the road swerved. There, before us, partly concealed by the pines, was the house. We hid behind the shrubbery and reconnoitred.

No car was visible at the side of the house. The chauffeur had gone. Pushing ahead gingerly, we made our way through the pine grove.

Then it was that the house assumed the qualities of an evil thing. We had an unobstructed view of it. In the daylight it stood out like a horned head of Satan. Now, at night, the two front windows glowed with light in a manner such as to be positively terrifying. It was like one of those old optical illusions—the windows were the veritable eye-sockets of a gigantic skull, glowing at me with an unearthly light! A little more and with the jaws of the front door I would have imagined a sardonic grin.

In the distance could be seen the house where the servants lived, dark and quiet.

"The Lord protect us!" choked back Aunt Cassie. "And you say you came here—alone?"

I was too scared at the weirdness of it all to answer. Ralph warned silence and crept nearer. In spite of my uncanny feelings I followed. We found ourselves almost between the lighted windows. I shuddered. Would these walls open, crush us, swallow us, for our presumption?

With the peculiar, cumbersome gun he had shown us Ralph aimed and fired at one window, then at the other. There was a shivering of glass and darkness after each re-echoing shot, then silence.

Ralph did not pause longer than to be sure that there was no further sound from within. He worked fast. From the porch he inserted his feet into crevices between the stones, drew himself up to one window, now dark. He forced the sash, shoving his hand in where the glass was broken to release the catch, and lifted himself in.

Aunt Cassie and I stood holding each other. She was trembling, too, from the excitement of it. I could have screamed. I heard a noise back of us—something crashing through the shrubbery!

The front door opened. I was afraid to look. Then I heard a voice. "Jobyna, come in—quick!"

The relief! It was Ralph. I did not even give another look at the crashing thing out there in the shrubbery, but with Aunt Cassie ran into Ralph's arms in the hall.

"Keep close to me! We'll have to hurry! It won't last long!"

Now I saw a light through the door of the front room again. Ralph had flung open other windows on the side. In spite of that I caught a strange odor, felt a terrible faintness seize me. I saw Ralph, now and then, cramming his handkerchief to his nose. I did the same. Aunt Cassie pulled me over by a window and that revived my momentary weakness.

A few breaths of the clear night air. I drew my head in from the open window and turned to look about me. I saw Aunt Cassie now doing the same, bewilderment, horror in every feature. She seemed too overcome to speak. She nudged me and pointed at something. I looked, nearly fled from the room.

There, on a divan, sat Howard Penwarden, a laughing, gibbering idiot!

He was drooling at the mouth, running his attenuated fingers aimlessly through his long dark hair and smirking about in silly fashion. Now and then he would burst into peals of ungodly laughter.

"Ralph! What is it?" I could not get above an awed whisper.

"Don't ask, Jo. I'm in a hurry. I must work fast. He will tell me the truth now!"

I looked hastily about me. It was a different room from that in which I had been that morning, but it showed the evidences of the same mind, grotesque furniture, art objects, bronzes, shelves piled with books on the mind and its working, queer, scientific instruments of which I knew nothing, a gazing ball, even a mediumistic cabinet. It

all betrayed to me that we were in the den of Professor Mentino.

My attention was diverted from the room to Ralph's stern questions to Penwarden.

"You expected Jobyna to fail to-night, didn't you?"

"Yes! So did the professor. Ha! ha! Something went wrong somewhere! He was ready to kill me when I told him. Ha! Ha!" Penwarden doubled up, laughing, continued staring at us like an imbecile.

"Why did you expect it, Howard?" I couldn't help interrupting Ralph.

"You were hypnotized, and didn't know it. Ha! Ha!"

"Don't you laugh at her, you young villain. I'll teach you better manners!" I believe Aunt Cassie would have given him that delayed shaking if Ralph had not interfered.

"Tell me about it," he commanded. "How was it done?"

Penwarden stopped his insane laughter, looked dazedly at me as if trying to concentrate. "Why—why—when Jobyna and I went to the Vandermore first the professor hypnotized her. He was careful she should not know it. During the visit the suggestion was given her that she *must fail* in the song and dance at the opening of the opera. Then he commanded silence about himself. He told her she was to tell no one of that visit until after the opening. It was wonderful—the way she fell for it!"

I stood aghast. What a dupe I had been! Aunt Cassie put her arms about me. She saw how I felt.

"Go on!" Ralph shouted sternly at the half-crazed man.

"When she left," he continued, "she was herself again, but not her whole self, as before. She had forgotten in her conscious mind this commandment of failure, but she had a subconscious sense of impending disaster. That was the better. The command was in her unconscious!"

"I—I never heard of such a thing!" Aunt Cassie held me as if she were a charm against all the evil spirits of the nether world. "My dear girl!"

Penwarden sank back in his chair, weak, faint. Ralph did not seem worried about that condition.

"Hurry, now!" Ralph was pushing us out into the hall. "Get a breath of fresh air here. I want to tie that gentleman up until I am ready to take him away."

Aunt Cassie drew back as if the air in the hall were almost more polluted than the air in the den. There, bowing and smiling, stood the gypsy in the doorway from the outside. Her appearance in this place at that hour was another strain on Aunt Cassie's nerves.

"Go away! Go away!"

The gypsy regarded her with a tolerant smile and advanced to Ralph, who was leaving the den muttering, "I trussed him up!"

"Am I too late?" the gypsy almost hissed.

"No—just in time! The old man—next!"

Her white teeth shone against the bronze skin and red lips as she turned grinning toward us.

Aunt Cassie whispered: "That gypsy bodes no good! I don't trust her! Keep that gun handy, dear!" I put my right hand in my pocket and kept it on the gun in the folds of my wrap.

"See, Jo?" Ralph was bustling toward a like room across the hall. "Hypnotic suggestion made you fail, malicious, evil suggestion. Good, inspiring suggestion saved you. You won!"

The gypsy wagged her head. "And the mud!"

"Heroes and cowards are both creatures of imagination!" Ralph had his hand on the other door now. "Who imagines only success is a hero. Who imagines failure is a coward. Both are moved by the same power of imagination. Suggestion will do it." He turned the knob. "Hurry. It won't last much longer now. This man is our worst enemy, too!"

There was no one in the room, but all about were books and papers. There was a door up a dark staircase. Ralph mounted.

"Are you all right, Ralph?" called Aunt Cassie.

"Yes, these steps lead to a little room in the tower. Good Lord, here he is, on the floor. He tried to escape and fell, overcome. It's dark here. I'll carry him down!"

Staggering down the pitch of the stairway came Ralph with a man's body in his arms. He laid Mentino on a couch!

"Is he—dead?" whispered Aunt Cassie.

Ralph put his head down on the man's breast, felt his pulse nervously. "No—only overpowered. You will hear him laughing like an idiot soon."

Quietly, with a venomous quietude, the gypsy glided over and looked at Mentino. Then she nodded, not with a grin, though she showed her white teeth to Ralph: "I am right! I am right! It is the man! I have succeeded! Now—he pay! I will——"

"No—no!" Aunt Cassie screamed as a sharp little stiletto gleamed in the gypsy's hand. But it was Ralph who stayed its fall with an iron grip.

The gypsy was sobbing shrilly. "He no good! Wicked man! I—I know!"

I had been leaning with my back against a table desk, my palms outstretched behind me on it. As I turned my hand brushed a little notebook on the floor. Mechanically I stooped to pick it up, and as I did so my eye lit on the page where it had fallen open. Curiosity, woman's weakness from Pandora to me, made me look. There, written in a hand that I knew to be my father's, on the flyleaf next to the cover was his own name: "Galen Rutledge, M.D."

In my excitement I forgot everything as I realized that about me, from a safety deposit box, lay other papers belonging to my father. I seized them all eagerly.

"Aunt Cassie—Ralph—he didn't lose them down that ravine! Here they are—all my father's discoveries! What does it mean?"

I looked eagerly over the notebook and the papers, all fingered, worn, soiled with the grime of years. Shaking in my trembling hands were my father's notes—some discovery, some basic patent, with Mentino's minor additions!

I shoved them over to Ralph. He scanned them with one eye on Mentino, who was coming out of it. Aloud he read:

"I have found the secret of youth. To have youth and beauty the mind must be *free*. No body is older than its mind. No woman is older than her skin. Eternal youth comes with both—the inward mind, the outward appearance.

"I have found that suggestion stimulates the mind. And I have found what will stimulate the skin. There is a mud which I will name Beauty Clay which takes care of the outward appearance.

"For months I have been stimulating suggestible minds by suggestion and making inward youth. At last I have the secret of outward youth in this mineral mud, a lava, here in the Tyrol. I know how it can be prepared to make fading beauty radiant and attractive and I have succeeded in doing so. All my theories are carefully explained in the following notes. There is no chance for failure. I have tried it—and it succeeds."

Mentino laughed, the laugh of a devil. His mirth was uncanny. It sent chills down my spine, but the eyes that I had formerly feared held no terror for me now.

Rocking back and forth in his mirth, Mentino looked mockingly at us as we gathered about him.

"How did you get these papers, Mentino?" demanded Ralph.

"I took them from his laboratory that night after he was killed!" Again his laughter made me sicken.

"How did Galen Rutledge die?" Ralph thundered at him.

"I cut the rope and gave him a push. I would have killed the guide, too, only I needed him to get back."

Aunt Cassie would have fallen if the gypsy had not caught her. She sank back in the big chair, weeping bitterly. "Galen! Galen! And we never knew!"

The gypsy flashed a look of hate at Mentino as she cared tenderly for Aunt Cassie. Aunt Cassie did not realize whose ministrations she was receiving. I looked in horror at the laughing wretch.

"What became of the guide?"

The gypsy started forward angrily, but Ralph warned her to be silent.

"I accused him; I made him flee for his life. I had to get rid of him. He was the

man who owned the farm in the valley in the Tyrol that was worth millions to me. It was there only that Rutledge could find the mud that he developed into his beauty clay. His wife fled with him, and I took the farm. The rest was easy!"

It was the breaking-point for the gypsy. She pushed Ralph aside, seized Mentino by the shoulder and swung him around. She stooped over, peered into his eyes and screamed: "Yes—look! Bianca comes back—for judgment!"

He stared at her, and fear seemed to grow on his face as if realization were momentarily pushing through the clouds that obscured his mind. An evil look came into his eyes.

"Bianca?" he muttered.

"Yes—Bianca—kept young by the mud you stole; able to follow you to ends of earth! I know who kill American doctor; I know who kill my Sandro—my husband!" There was a sob in her fierceness. "He die—exile—broken by fear. You make him stay away from beloved Tyrol!"

She paused. Hers were eyes that Mentino could not escape. "When he die I come back to farm as gypsy. You not know. Nobody listen to me. You rich; I poor gypsy. At night I bathe in the mud. So I keep young. All time I see you richer and richer, and I think my poor Sandro die, alone, hunger, sickness of heart, far away. I hate you! I have curse you!"

Aunt Cassie was listening, amazed. Here was drama revealed in our own lives.

Suddenly Mentino saw the book and papers in Ralph's hands. He darted forward quickly, but I was more quick.

"Sit down—you—devil!" I had him covered with the little automatic. He saw it, made no move. He had no wish to follow my father. I kept the gun pointed at his head.

"Why you come America? I tell! You got letter from government of death of American doctor, eh? I know! I tell fortune one day government man. He write letter."

"You——" Mentino cut short. I moved the gun closer.

"You go Paris—make much money—with my mud. I follow! You get other letter—from me. Then you come America. You no think I can get here, but I follow—follow!"

"What about that, Mentino?"

"Yes. I came to America. There were millions of dollars here for me. All women want beauty, to keep beauty. Yes, I wanted American dollars——"

Ralph interrupted. "You found that some one knew that the death of Galen Rutledge was not natural, you mean. There was no other way out for you! Go on!"

Whatever it was there seemed again to come that same vacant, smirking look on Mentino's face.

"I had a son. I knew Rutledge had a daughter, now an actress. If my son and this child of Rutledge were married, it might all be settled, hushed up, to avoid scandal, but the girl had other ideas. She defied me—refused my son. I would see that she took him!" His voice rose in a hollow laugh.

The gypsy hissed, interrupting: "You always evil, no right to live! Things you do to minds of Tyrol peasants, those poor girls, in the science, you call it—ugh!—when I am through the world know! Bianca never forget—never sleep!"

"Go on, Mentino." Ralph stepped between him and the gypsy. "You might as well!"

"I am a mystic—an elemental. I determined to steal that girl's mind, her self, her soul!"

"God forgive him!" Aunt Cassie cried. "Such blasphemy!"

"I would steal her beauty, too, and then her voice. Failure would come to her. She would not marry my son. I did not care. Her father was gone; her mother was gone. If she were dead or insane my secret would be mine alone. No one else would believe—— But something went wrong tonight. I do not know what. I told her to fail the next time she danced and sang in the second act."

"Yes!" Ralph's voice rang out clear. "Yes, and that was why you failed. You did not know that there was to be a rehearsal. There was not. But we had one.

Like ordinary criminals, you left loose ends. You forgot to tell her not to talk about her visit this morning. You remembered yesterday. But I got my clue, on my guard, from her story—to-day!" Ralph leaned forward close to his face. "Who is your son?"

"Howard Penwarden. That was the name of his English mother—Penwarden."

"Did he know—you were a—murderer?" I shrilled.

"No. He thought I had only stolen the farm. He likes money—wanted to help me keep it!"

In a flash I saw it all. Howard had sought me out, had talked on mental science, suggested morbid thoughts and studies to me, had given me books concerning death and communication with the dead to read. I saw it all. I was emotional, suggestible. He soon had me willing to visit Mentino, his father. Then the rest was easy. As I thought of it I felt ashamed of myself. How silly and futile I had been! Without thinking I let the gun waver.

There was a scurrying of feet. Mentino had tried to break away. But Bianca was ahead of him, ahead of Ralph. Stiletto raised high, she brought it down through the air with vicious force. But it encountered nothing—until it buried its sharp blade in a pillow on the divan.

For, with a scream of fear at the stiletto, at the same instant, with hands clutching at his heart, Mentino had sunk limp, down, forward, sliding off the divan out of Bianca's reach on the floor, dead.

Bianca looked from the stiletto to the huddled heap on the floor and cried: "I have failed! I swore to kill!"

Aunt Cassie by this time was on her feet. "A higher Judge than you, Bianca, saved you from this crime. Your Sandro had vengeance. You must come—home—with me—for a few days'—rest—go to mass!"

Bianca turned to me. There were tears in her eyes. "Missy, we are rich! You have half—I have half. I have mud farm—you have doctor's secret that make it right use! No more worry—justice!"

"Father's blood money!" I paused, revolting, almost on the point of putting her away from me.

"Take it, Jo." I felt Ralph at my side. "It is yours by inheritance. Build a theatre for yourself—anything. You can present the wholesome, inspiring—your part in the drama!"

I thought a moment. "Yes. Good. Something to strive for, Ralph." I saw the woman stripping off the head-dress, the beads, the coins, the trappings of the gypsy. She was really beautiful, with eyes and face softened by years of suffering in silence. I put my arm about her and kissed her forehead lightly. "Bianca helped. She must never leave us."

"Yes," exclaimed Ralph. "Bianca told me her story after Aunt Cassie put her out of the apartment. I told her to keep her secret—it was better so—come here to-night. She knew the place."

"When you go honeymooning Bianca will take me to the mud farm; you will see a rejuvenated Aunt Cassie."

Ralph started across the hall. "I must get Penwarden. We can't hold him for anything. He——" His voice trailed off as he left, until a minute later I heard him shouting, "Jobyna! He's gone! He wriggled out of the rope!"

"Maybe it's just as well," I murmured, shrinking now into the hall from this awful room.

"You'll never see him again!" exclaimed Aunt Cassie. "Ralph, what did I tell you? God is on the side of the right. God has won!"

"Yes, Aunt Cassie; with the aid of laughing gas—nitrous oxide—yes. He won!"

The Apostle of Gutterside

By NEIL McCONLOGUE

DOWN in a man-made district, a geographical wrinkle of the metropolis, lies the tenement tract. When it is warm in other places it is not so on the East Side; when other parts of the city are wrapped in chill winds, it is freezing—over where the poor begins.

This section, splashed upon the city's face by Squalor, the painter, is but three minutes, as the foot flies, from the world's richest avenue, and only three or less generations, by financial rating, from the same boulevard. This neighborhood—where the United States penny is still recognized, welcomed by curbstone corporations, vending delicacies at a cent a chance—is Gutterside.

It is in this part of the city that we find the needy. Every block is dappled with want and territorial nicknames. One of the best known is "Soapsuds Heights," where legion of damp garments cling to clotheslines in aerial flight, from back window to back window, and snap in the breeze. And another has long ago been dubbed "The Magic Block." Officer Donovan so christened it.

"As sure as I'm a copper," Donovan seriously assured his superior officer, "when Mrs. Devlin's shiny face was shoved through her second-floor window, and when she hollered 'Maggie!' twenty girls, by exact count, 'pon my word, answered, 'All right, ma!'"

In this poverty placer Officer Lew Madden learned how to walk his beat. Dressed in stout navy-blue, studded with brass buttons, Madden thumped out eight hours' duty as a policeman.

He was about the last person you would choose as such when he was not in uniform, and that may be the reason for his promotion into the rank of detective, and from there to sergeantcy, the rank he held at the time this incident occurred. Once you knew him to be an officer of the law you would never again picture members of his arduous calling as square-toed, bull-necked, cruel-lipped individuals.

As to his appearance: Form a mental image of a tall, upstanding man whose face is usually emotionless, whose clothes fit well and always have the proper crease. Picture a man whose hair is six feet above the ground and frapped at the temples by the flakes of forty winters; a man whose eyes are of a glinty gray, their every dart imparting a clear vision of what they see to an active, receptive brain.

Give your picture a jaw that is not too square, but one that clicks shut on occasion with a metallic echo, and you have Lew Madden.

When he first patroled Gutterside the neighborhood troglodites smirked from behind grimy hands, anticipating Madden's introduction to Tony Lenard, the strutting gangster, who had been daily sidestepped by the man whose place Madden had taken.

Anticipation, however, in this instance was short-lived, and "Dago" Lenard's rule ended the night Madden pursued him through mazy hallways, over roof-tops, to a pitched battle, which proved that a night-stick, in the hands of a brave man, is more formidable than a well-honed stiletto in the clutch of a bullying coward. However, after Madden's attention thereabouts arrests were fewer; the population nevertheless had not dwindled; visits of the patrol-wagon took a noticeable slump, and the gamma-rays of sleuthdom seldom disclosed criminal activities rampant on Madden's beat. Subsequently, though, many of the gangster chiefs of latter days, now holding

forth in other parts, can trace their beginnings under the latticed shadows made by the elevated structure as it swoops through this verdant district. And they owed their departure to Madden!

Our first meeting occurred while I was covering the "police run" for the *Chronicle* as a reporter. Our meeting gave me a story, an incident carved from the joint of coincidence, but one that the officer and a sense of responsibility sewed up.

There is, it seems, no truce between Time and Time's accomplice—death! For these two highwaymen of the world go about wresting and robbing the golden hours, and as the dance progresses the world bears witness. With the police department and criminals the same simile is applicable. No truce! Sometimes, of course, the criminal tarries before the long arm of the law darts out and draws him into the confines of the ever-yawning prison, but Justice has her day always!

I was strolling down one of the side streets of the rialto district. Racing up from behind came the fire apparatus, later to turn the corner ahead of me, where the Hotel Rome was burning. I followed in the sparky wake of the engines, expecting a story.

The fire-fighters were at work in and about the flame-embraced structure; police lines were draped for the protection of the curious.

A roar went up which drew my attention to one of the upper windows, for or five floors above the street, in which stood a man. From behind the trapped guest poured a thin stream of smoke; the man gesticulated, but the din of the street below muffled his frantic appeals.

A ladder shot up through the smoke-stifled air and halted at the window. It had hardly bounded into place when a man in civilian clothes ascended; the man, Lew Madden, though some distance from his district, saw a duty to be performed—and he responded.

Reaching the window, now profusely belching milky puffs of smoke, the rescuer found that the guest had disappeared; evidently he sought a quicker avenue of escape or rescue. The detective crawled over the window-sill and into the room. Suspense reigned. Seconds seemingly became hours, and all but the business-like firemen watched the window above.

Out of flame-fringed smoke Madden appeared and slowly descended the ladder; the figure of a young man rode the officer's shoulder. The first to reach Madden's side, as he stepped from the ladder, I asked:

"Was he overcome, sergeant?"

"He was when I pulled him from under the bed," gravely assured the rescuer. "He's a gent the police know as 'Kenneth the Quill,' a forger the department has been anxious to get hold of!"

The man lay at our feet. His respiration was neither audible nor apparent, and his mask-like, ashen features appeared a cardinal sign that the law had been cheated, in spite of Madden's heroic feat.

The officer reached for and found the prisoner's pulse. Something must have been at fault along the artery line, for Madden frowned and, looking up at me, said:

"Take hold of his feet and we'll carry him over to Stillson's drugstore."

This we did, and after efforts supplied by Madden and restoratives supplied by Stillson's clerk the thief raised himself on one elbow to ask:

"What's—what's happened?"

"It has been about ten months since you passed that 'bad paper' you raised—the Amber Auto pay checks—hasn't it, Kenneth?" queried Madden captiously.

The forger didn't commit himself. Events must have assembled rapidly in his ordinarily nimble mind. And from out of his immersion in smoke the clearing skies had no doubt again taken on a threatening hue, this time even darker than the clouds from which he had just been rescued.

"Have you frisked him for a gun, sergeant?" I whispered.

"His kind never pack artillery. About the only thing they ever shoot off is their mouth." But regardless of his satisfied indifference Madden kept an eye on the business at hand.

Having adjusted himself to the new aspect in his kaleidoscopic affairs, 'The Quill'

answered Madden's query in an abstracted sort of way.

"Your dope's not far wrong, Mr. Madden; it's usually that way. However, I'm not thinking so much about it as I am about another feature of this day's adventure. Before we go any further I have a wire that I wish you would read," and assuming the officer's consent, the prisoner handed Madden a telegram, saying

"It's from my father."

After reading the message Madden handed the sheet to me. Bearing the current date, it informed the forger that the sender would arrive that day on the Blue Bird Express. It was signed "Dad."

"Does he know your racket?" Madden was asking as I handed the message back to the thief.

"No, he thinks I'm traveling for an automobile accessories company, out of Detroit."

"No doubt he would be glad to hear about the long-term contract you're about to sign with the state?" added Madden.

"That's what I'd like to spare him; he doesn't need to know. There are some situations that the best of us, or the worst of us, never anticipate. This is one of them."

"You're trying to take a fine tack to keep this information away from your father, I must say! What about the cuffs?" said Lew.

"He'd never know the difference," pathetically assured the forger.

"You must think that your father is blind."

"He is," patiently replied "The Quill."

His voice dripped with that something which nips the heart and makes one ashamed they are the aggressor. The words were soft-toned and came as though breathed. The nostrils of the dejected victim quivered perceptibly. Fleeting muscular waves rippled across the side of the youth's face; up they went to the templer area, signification that a battle of the nerves was being fought against a teary breakdown.

My guess was that "The Quill" was doing his stuff—acting. I imagined he was playing for time; that he had an accomplice in the offing who would try to make a vent and give his co-worker a chance to escape. Madden, however, versed in the ways of the criminal class, saw something genuine—something that I missed.

"How do I know that you haven't a pal who'd start something for you, providing I did grant your request?" pried the law.

"You know my record. You know I work alone." After which the thief consulted a thin, expensive watch and then continued: "You can see by the date that my father arrives to-day, and the train's due in half an hour. We could make the trip in less than that—if we hurry. In another hour we could have lunch somewhere. I would gradually make an opening to tell my father that I was called away—say to Europe, or the Pacific Coast—on business. Then I could start him home on the next upstate train." The forger bowed his head, and as Madden made no effort to do one thing or the other, the thief continued:

"When you see him you won't want to hurt him. I had hoped he might make the Big Divide—and never know.

"If you'll do this, Madden, I'll pay taxi fare and lunch check. I kick back the money, every cent and the interest, in that Amber Auto check. And you can depend on me to plead guilty to that charge and save expense of trial."

As quickly as the detective made up his mind to scale the ladder an hour ago, so did he now. Twice his eyes swept the prisoner from head to tan, English-cut shoes. Twice his lips curled against his teeth, not cynically, but after the fashion of one trying to determine a weighty question. Turning to me, he asked:

"Want to come along?"

"Where to?" I countered, question for question.

"The Grand Central station." I nodded my willingness, too surprised at this unusual twist of the affair to utter my willingness.

"It is my vacation time, Kenneth," continued Madden. "I am going to spare you the necessary time, and we'll not resort to the cuffs; they're too noisy. But remember this, if you make a spectacle of yourself

and a fool of me by trying any funny business"—here Madden pulled his hat a trifle farther down in front, pushed both hands a little deeper into his coat pockets and finished—"try any funny business, and there won't be *any* trial!"

The Grand Central teemed with life as we tread our way through the [illegible]vded, babbling terminal. Gate number twelve was open and through it sluiced the incoming passengers from the Blue Bird express, later to be swallowed by the rumbling city.

The weary, glad-to-be-free travelers arrived alone, in twos, threes and greater groups, later to be met by a like number of relatives or friends who anxiously or impatiently bobbed, craned, peeked over, under and around the head, neck and shoulders of those nearer to the gate.

The forger stood a trifle in front between Madden and I.

Eagerly he watched the arriving passengers, but apparently none of them interested him. The last straggler, a Chinaman, weighted with two cane-like suit cases, passed by. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Madden studying his man, and with a tongue-in-my-cheek expression and an amused sparkle in my eyes, which meant but one thing, "You're mistaken, Madden," I was about to remark, "The young man's father must have missed his train," when the thief made the dash through the gate, then being closed by an attendant.

Quick as he was, our alertness proved too much for him.

Before he reached the nearest car on the train we had him in a stranglehold. He swept us both with a look of baffled despair, and I momentarily felt ashamed of my part in the scuffle. The next moment, however, I was thrilled—thrilled by a cry of gladness such as I have not heard since the joyful occasion of Armistice Day.

"Dad! Oh, Dad! It's Kenny!"

The quality of that cry struck Madden, too, and we both released our holds, while the "Quill" hastened to meet the last passenger from the Blue Bird express.

With the aid of the colored porter an old man was coming toward us. Hearing the youth's call, he halted. And for a moment all participants in the little drama stood motionless. Then the old man's lean, wan-looking face leaped to the urge of his joyous heart and he smiled.

"Damn me if he isn't on the square!" Madden had found his voice.

Drawing near, I saw that paralysis had stricken the nerves and that they were no longer capable of transmitting orders to the right side of the old man's body. This caused a hideous, twitching effort intended to be a smile. It was a smile never to be forgotten. The mouth-line was drawn queerly, piteously; on one side of the face a feeble smile appeared, while the other side seemed to be in the throes of agony.

He raised his gray head, tried to throw back his shoulders—shoulders now drooped by the years they bore—then he made the mistake of trying to walk in the direction from whence came his boy's voice, and only the quick clutch of the colored porter's hands prevented a threatened fall. The right arm and leg hung useless at the man's side.

They stood locked in a loving embrace. Tears trickled down the forger's face, while the father patted a silent message, in "cardiac code," upon his son's back—silent, he-man message.

"Are we alone, Kenny? Or have you some friends with you?" asked the father, the sixth sense of the blind telling him that others were near.

"I have two gentlemen with me, Dad." And turning towards me, "The Quill" said: "This is Mr. Smith, Dad; he is also in the automobile business. Mr. Smith, meet my father, Mr. Barrows."

We exchanged grips, the old man giving me his left hand.

"And this other gentleman, Dad, is—er——" The boy paused, clenched his fist until each knuckle showed in high relief; then the blind man interrupted:

"Is who, my boy? Oh, I know you have a surprise for your father!"

"Yes—yes, I—I have a surprise for you, Dad; this other friend is—is a very dear one." The boy turned to us for aid. But there was nothing that we could do, so he struck out. And of the legion of names to

choose from, only the detective's name and title stood out in his mind.

"This gentleman, Dad, is Sergeant Madden," he finished.

The rank sergeant could only mean one thing to Mr. Barrows. For when the boy was serving a sentence in Sing Sing he arranged with his mother that the information should be kept from the father. The old man was very low physically and couldn't stand the blow. And each week, as the boy's letters arrived in the wee town in upper New York, the mother transposed them in the reading, assuring the father that all was well with their only child, and that the boy would return safely from France—an honor man.

That is why the title sergeant meant but one thing to the old man.

"Well, I declare, one of your trench buddies in the late war!" exclaimed the old man enthusiastically. He trembled with joy as he spoke.

Madden reached for and gripped the shriveled left hand, squeezed it warmly as he heartily assured:

"Yes—Mr. Barrows—Kenny and I are old buddies—old side-kickers, and we've been through some pretty tight pinches. Kenny has been very anxious that I meet you. We are both interested in the same game, you know, now. Fact is Kenny is now guided by yours truly."

The beaten expression that at first graced the old fellow's face had softened as Madden rambled on, and in turn the old man said:

"I am proud and mighty pleased to meet you, Sergeant Madden. You have a voice that inspires confidence and rings true, and I am sure that you will always be a great help to my son.

"Mother must have mentioned your name when she read Kenney's letter to me. I'm sure she thrilled me with news of the training on this side and the later experiences of you and Kenny in France. That is what kept me alive, made me carry on—for this meeting. I know she, too, was glad that our boy had such a friend as you; but since mother's death and my last stroke my memory hasn't been much, and your name has skipped out of my mind."

Madden looked at "The Quill." We both did, and perhaps thought the same thoughts. Can it be possible that this youthful crook, who so dexterously evaded the cleverest of the police department and whose exploits had baffled the resources of a great commonwealth, not to mention the mechanical assistance of other states—is this the chap who from a prison cell managed to soften life and gladden the heart of a crippled old father with his tales of imaginary exploits in France?

"And mother and me tried to do our bit," continued the elder Barrows. "We cut down all expenses and worked for the Red Cross. The war days were the only times that our regular monthly remittance from Kenny failed to arrive. He never failed us before going into the service, but mother and me understood. Poor mother—she could not live to bless him, now that he is back." And his trembling lips told of a great love.

Madden and I waged a silent battle for the privilege of relieving the porter on one side of the old gentleman. Madden won—won and tenderly escorted the belated passenger to a waiting taxicab.

During the meal Lew Madden held the old man spellbound. Being himself a distinguished service man, possessing the emblem symbolizing this fact, as well as a rambling scar which zigzagged part way across his chest, proof of the direction in which he was going when wounded, Madden knew of whence he spoke.

He told minutely of the attacks, combats, occasional retreat, reinforcements, often introduced after Kenneth had courageously faced death to deliver dispatch matter. He touched upon counter-attacks and the many victories, and always Kenneth played a major part!

As the detective talked to the old man he made notes upon the other side of the menu card; notes that prompted Kenneth as to what he should say and how. Comments were uttered by the youth, to the delight of the father.

Mingled with my surprise, as event rolled

after event, came a greater respect for Madden. It tingled through me.

The meal drew to a close, and I wondered how matters would be arranged so that Mr. Barrows would go unsuspectingly back to his home—alone.

"You've been going at a pretty steady pace, Kenny," Madden was saying. "And, as an after thought, and since talking to your father, I am inclined to believe that the trip to the Coast, of which you have already advised your father, is not necessary.

"You know it would mean a long stay, and as your dad expects to spend a vacation with you, I feel that we should postpone the trip. Now, have you got that Amber Auto contract with you?" Here the officer wrote the word "money" on the menu card and underlined it.

Puzzled, wide-eyed and overcome, Kenneth handed Madden four hundred and some odd dollars, after which the detective continued:

"This reads as though we can handle this matter in an entirely different way from what our afternoon plans predicted."

"Then your firm can spare me my boy, and he can come home for a vacation, instead of my having to stay here in the roaring city?" enthusiastically interrupted the old man.

"I believe so," assured Madden. "And it's a fine suggestion you have made. Now take this rascal home with you, Mr. Barrows, and make him knuckle down to some good old hard work. He needs it. I don't believe he has had any old-fashioned labor since his splendid work abroad, and he's beginning to stale. The truth is you are virtually a life-saver for Kenny. A man can't keep in good condition if a traveling bag and a fountain pen are the heaviest things he has packed in months, can he, Mr. Barrows?"

"Quite true, sergeant," assured our guest.

"Now if you will excuse Mr. Smith and myself we'll run along. Don't forget to write me, Kenny; let me know how things are going upstate. Gosh! but I'd like to go along with you folks. Good-by, Mr. Barrows! Take care of yourself, Kenny; come on, Smith, before we, too, entrain for a rest!"

That was three years ago. Since then Lew Madden has been called before the police commissioners, who appointed him chief of detectives, the position he now holds.

To-day I strolled into the bureau and found the chief polishing his nails, using the chubby part of his hand as buffer.

"Anything new, chief?"

"Yes," came his hearty reply. "'Member that kid I hauled out of the Hotel Rome?"

"Kenneth?" I added, well recalling the full-page story that Madden had sewed up.

"Guess I told you that he paid back the money on three checks we knew nothing about, out of state activities. And I remember informing you when some towny-girl of his took him in tow as her husband. Now, read this," and he handed me the telegram that had arrived that very morning. It read:

"It's a boy, chief. We've named him Lewis Madden Barrows. Weighs ten pounds. KENNETH."

"Dranoel" of Scotland Yard

By J. ELBERT JONES, Detective

CHAPTER ONE

WITH a feeling of awe I followed the silent form of the bellhop, who glided along in the semi-darkness of the hall. The very stillness of that great hotel with its dimmed lights and whispering shadows filled me with apprehension and unconsciously my hand slid into the pocket where I carried an automatic.

"Had they fulfilled their sworn promise? Would they recognize me and I them after all these years?" were the ideas that were racing through my mind with a vividness that caused every sense to be on the alert.

My thoughts were interrupted by the bellhop who, as if by mechanism, stopped, turned right-face, pushed a door open and said:

"Wait in there."

Then he vanished as if by magic in the grotesque shadows of the hall.

For a moment I hesitated; then summoning courage, and with my heart palpitating with expectancy, I stepped into the room. With one quick glance around I heaved a sigh of relief, for the place was unoccupied.

Wiping the sweat of imaginary fear from my brow, I slid into rather than sat down in a chair, and to occupy my mind until my two friends should appear, I allowed my thoughts to travel back over the span of years that had elapsed since I had entered that room, and of the jest that was misunderstood, but which caused three men to become willing exiles.

My thoughts were again interrupted, this time by the shrill cry of a newsboy on the street—a cry that brought me to my feet in genuine fear, with every fiber of my body trembling.

"Gre-a-t Bank Rob-b-e-r-y! Q. O. D. is here!"

As the echo of his voice died away in the distance I became conscious of a presence in the doorway.

CHAPTER TWO

LEONARD PALMER threw down his cards in disgust.

"Might have known better than to have opened the pot on a pair of queens; they are like the 'Modern Eve'—quit you cold when you least expect it."

"Listen to him rave, Jimmie," said Douglas. "He is down on the gentle sex just because a pair of queens will not beat a flush. It's too bad you——"

"Oh, cut the chatter! You win and I am through for to-night," remarked Palmer. "In fact, I will never play poker again, not because I lost, but because I am sick of the life I am living."

"Well, what do you think of that?" laughed Douglas. "Say, I'll bet a hundred that Edith gave you the gate, just as she did me. Said she would never marry a clubman or stage-door johnnie. Her spouse-to-be must be a business man, a self-made man, a man who could support himself and a wife without the aid of an indulgent father's check-book. Am I right,"

"Yes, you are right; she refused to marry me until I had made a man of myself, and I do not blame her, for what have I to offer her in common with her pure soul and body," said Palmer bitterly.

"Tell us all about it, Leonard. Of course you are going to reform, go to work, walk the straight and narrow path, never to be seen on the Great White Way again for a spell; then you will seek the fair Edith and ask for your reward. Does that illustrate your love dream, Leonard? Of course it will be a great help to your poor dad, who's bank balance has dwindled to only a few million dollars."

In order to prevent a breach between the two friends I cut in on the conversation, for Bob Douglas was cutting Leonard to the quick with his words.

"Leonard is right, Bob, if that is his intention."

That served as an excuse for shifting the attack from Leonard to me, for in an insinuating voice Douglas said:

"Tell me, Jimmie, are you responsible for the terrible state of mind that Leonard is now in? Is it a fact that since accepting the honored position as correspondent for the *Society Gazette* you have had a change of heart, thereby becoming self-supporting? Well, your father has enough to support when he feeds the families of all the employees of the two railroads that he owns."

As a matter of fact, I was social correspondent for the *Society Gazette*, and was proud of the fact that I could write acceptable articles for that paper. Before I could answer his insinuating remarks Douglas asked:

"If such is the case, Jimmie, would you impart the facts whereby Leonard saw the light of your wisdom, and whereby I might become a man of toil and acceptable to the feminine sex?"

While this dialogue was in progress a story that I had read in the past flashed through my mind—a story wherein ten men went out into the world to seek their fortune, agreeing to return to their native city after twenty years, or send a representative, to tell of their success or failures. On the spur of the moment I decided to test Douglas's nerve, and if he would accept a challenge—well, the joke would be on me. But I had no fear of a laugh at my expense.

"Yes, I know a way, but applicants must be men of metal, with nerves of steel and the courage to dare," I answered.

In an instant he was on his feet, his face flushed, and taking a step, he pointed a quivering finger at me and said:

"I dare you to lead me anywhere that I cannot follow or surpass you. And I take it for granted that Leonard will agree with me. What do you say, Leonard?"

"Yes, I agree," came the surprising answer.

My challenge had been accepted. Little did I dream of what a practical joke could lead to. But it was too early in the game for me to see the climax, so, clearing my throat and commanding all the force that was within me, I said:

"I propose that each man draw a card from the deck that is on the table. The king shall be high, and the ace will be low. Whosoever shall draw the low card shall draw another card (when all face cards shall count as ten). The number of that card will denote the number of years we shall be exiled from our relatives and friends, under oath not to come within one thousand miles of New York City."

As I noticed the perplexed looks on their faces and the positive frown on Bob's brow, I was exultant within. I would shatter their courage and soften their nerve before I was through.

"In order that we shall be exiled from each other, and to insure that we will stay where we are exiled, I will write the names of as many foreign nations as is practicable on separate slips of paper, place them in a hat, and each man shall draw one slip. We shall carefully guard the name thereon for our own information. The remaining slips shall be burned without being read, thereby making it impossible for one to know where the other is. And for fear of coming face to face with one another, thereby breaking our oath, each will stay where he is assigned."

As I ceased speaking I casually and in a nonchalant way lit a cigarette, then looked into the features of my friends for their approval, but expected a protest.

Whether it was from the effect of the electric storm that was raging outside, the

splashing of the rain against the window-panes, or the thunderous roar of the wind, I sensed a feeling of weakness, of fear of the future. But, why—it was all a joke, and if the laugh was on me—well, I would find other means of getting even.

For several seconds there was no comment, but the shadow of determination on their faces was in complete contrast to the hilarious expression of an hour ago. Then the weakest link in the chain became the strongest as Bob Douglas began shuffling the cards and I heard their voices in union:

"We accept your dare on the conditions you have mentioned."

A cold chill of apprehension crept down my spine when I realized that they had accepted in all earnestness what I had meant for a practical joke, thereby becoming martyrs to a false idea of bravery.

I tried to explain that the dare was only a joke, that it was not meant to be taken seriously. But I was again misunderstood, for I was accused of cowardice and of being a weakling, whereupon, in a fit of desperation, I hastily wrote the names of all the foreign nations of the white race, also the United States (which would mean west of the Mississippi river), on separate slips of paper, and placed them in a hat. Then I calmly drew a card from the deck and turned it face upward on the table.

Leonard Palmer drew the low card, and without hesitating drew the fourth card, the denomination of which placed our lives in exile for so many years.

Palmer turned the card face upward on the table, then staggered back, his face blanched. With staring eyes he pointed wildly at the card.

"We separate for ten years of exile!" he muttered.

CHAPTER THREE

IT has been many a day, yes, many a year, since that eventful night. What was meant for a practical joke turned my ship of life from a devil-may-care cruise into the smooth waters of a commercial and useful life. I became associate editor of a daily paper in a Pacific coast city, the proud possessor of a home, a wife, a son and contentment.

Whether it was fate that was guiding my destiny, or just plain luck that I drew the slip of paper marked "United States," I don't know. Long ago I had ceased to wonder or speculate as to my friends' whereabouts.

There were more modern things to think of, more interesting things to solve than digging into memories of the past.

I took up the study of criminology with my other work and became absorbed in it. On numerous occasions I had been of material assistance to the authorities, both civil and Federal, in solving strange mysteries.

It was singular, to say the least, that one morning, when my thoughts were never farther from the past, the editor came tearing into my office in a great state of mental excitement, fairly screaming:

"Jimmie, he is here! He cleaned out the vault, leaving nothing but his trade-mark. No more excuses, you must catch him now; you can——"

He stopped, gasping for breath.

"Wait a minute," I interrupted. "Who is 'he'? What vault was cleaned out, and what do you mean by his trade-mark?"

"There is only one 'he' and 'he' is 'Q. O. D.,' my boy," he shouted as he shoved a small linen card into my hand.

On the card and in the centre was printed in capital letters, "Q. O. D."

But that was sufficient to identify it as the trade-mark of a nationally known phantom burglar. The police called him the modern Robin Hood of the twentieth century, a genius in his knowledge of bank vaults and safes, their locks and combinations.

He was a man in whom was vested all the craftiness of the super-criminal, bold unto daring, invisible as a phantom, a master mind with a contempt for the law of the land. After each daring robbery a card was found in a conspicuous place proclaiming to the world that Q. O. D. had been there.

I was forcibly brought out of my reverie by another outburst from the editor.

"The chief of police is waiting for you out in the lobby. Take the day off, take a week off if necessary, but get over there now, and make it snappy, so we can make a scoop for the paper, for the chief has kept this job quiet until you could give it the once-over."

Ten minutes later we were at the bank, where I made a thorough search for a clue that would lead to the identity of the perpetrator of the crime. But after hours of exhaustive search and questioning of the employees, I had to admit that I was no nearer a solution of the case than when I first heard of it.

According to the statement of the watchman who was accompanied by the cashier on his last round of inspection before officially closing the bank at six o'clock on the preceding evening, the front, rear and side doors were securely locked and bolted. All windows and transoms were safely locked when he opened the bank at 7:55 a. m. the following morning.

There was no visible sign that the locks on the doors, windows or transoms had been tampered with, the burglar alarm was in perfect working order, nowhere outside the railing surrounding the teller cages was there any sign that a robbery had been committed.

But behind the teller cages the evidence was visible and conclusive. The vault door was standing wide open; papers of no value were strewn over the floor where they had been thrown after a hasty examination. Money, negotiable bonds and securities had vanished as if by magic, leaving no clue to their whereabouts, except that a chair had been placed against the door of the vault, as if to hold it open, and on the chair in plain sight was a small linen card, on which was printed the letters "Q. O. D."

That was the substance of my investigation which I telephoned to the editor. Then, feeling the sting of temporary failure keenly, I went home, where I locked myself in the den, as was my custom when wanting to think and be alone. Far into the night I sat at my desk with the card before my eyes, thinking, trying to decipher the definition to the letters.

Try as I might to place my thoughts in other channels, they would invariably return to incidents in my past life.

Those letters held a fascination for me far beyond the fact that I hoped to solve the identity of their author. I racked my memory for an answer, but to no avail. I could not connect them up with anything in my past, yet away back in the darkness of the past there was a faint memory. My subconscious mind told me if I could but fathom it I would know the definition of Q. O. D.

Five years before the first card bearing the initials of the now famous thief was seen in Toronto, Canada, and annually thereafter it had made its appearance in New York, Buffalo, Brooklyn and Detroit. And this was the sixth banking institution that had been robbed by this invisible being. He performed each robbery in the same manner, leaving no doubt that he was the perpetrator. After an exhaustive search after each robbery, the police reports were always filed under the heading of "Unsolved Crimes."

Every method known in criminology had been used to identify and apprehend this marvel of the ages; every wild rumor was run to earth, and every possible clue had been followed up and found useless. The means by which any individual or corporation had suddenly become rich had been closely scrutinized, without learning anything tangible.

It was no wonder that after five years' success the Bankers' Association trembled with apprehension at the very mention of Q. O. D. Bolted doors and combinations on modern safes and vaults held no terrors for him. He never had damaged or disfigured one.

Day after day I worked, thought and worried, for I had been given entire charge of the investigation, spent my entire time on it, and with unlimited means furnished by the Bankers' Association I had employed the best detectives and investigators this side the Atlantic without the least success.

I even cabled a complete report of all these robberies to the chief inspector at Scotland Yard, England, asking him to de-

tail a detective by the name of "Dranoel" to work on the case in this country.

Inspector Dranoel was a nationally known detective. In the past few years he had gained a place in the hall of fame by unraveling many mysterious crimes with great speed and accuracy.

But in answer to my cablegram the chief inspector said it would be impossible at this time for Inspector Dranoel to cross the Atlantic to assist me in solving the mystery, but Dranoel would begin an investigation of the case and in all probability would cross the Atlantic in the near future.

There was no other alternative but to wait word from that source. A month passed, then two, three, and so on until six had elapsed, but still I labored on, without success, neither did I hear anything more from Scotland Yard.

I spent many moody days and sleepless nights in silence and alone, always trying to decipher the definition of the letters Q. O. D., as I believed the solution of the crook's identity lay in that name. Small wrinkles became visible in my forehead and at the corner of my eyes, and gray hairs appeared at my temples.

One evening as I sat in moody silence in the library of my home my wife came in, and gently stroking my hair, she said softly:

"Jimmie, have you forgotten in all your worry, trying to solve this queer case, what the twenty-fifth of this month means to you?"

"What does it mean to me, dear?" I asked in surprise.

"It means, Jimmie, that it marks the end of your ten years' exile. It means that you must return to New York and fulfill your promise. But I hope that it does not mean that I will lose my husband and the father of my boy."

If an electric current had passed through my body the shock could not have been greater, as away back in the almost forgotten past that light, like mist, had burst with the impact of a bombshell on my shattered nerves.

In a flash it came to my memory why the letters Q. O. D. had impressed me so. Was it possible that there was any connection between Q. O. D. and the last card drawn by Leonard Palmer on that memorable night ten years ago, which was the "Queen of Diamonds?"

CHAPTER FOUR

AGAIN I heard the shrill cry of the newsboy on the street below, but farther down:

"Gre-a-t bank rob-b-e-r-y! Q. O. D. is here!" came floating upward, and with it the realization that I was not alone in the room.

In apprehension I whirled around and stood facing a man in the doorway. His face was pale and drawn, and lines of care and thoughtfulness were visible. He was dressed in the customary garb of a priest.

Recognition was mutual and instantaneous. With pleasure I grasped the hand of Bob Douglas for the first time in ten years.

Hardly were we seated when I became aware of a cat-like tread in the hallway which paused at the door, and upon looking up I beheld a man of powerful physique, whose clothing, while neat and clean, was the worse for wear.

As he stood there, hat in hand, I saw a bright light of recognition and happiness spring up in his eyes, but noticing our close scrutiny, the light faded and an expression of reproach appeared.

With a feeling of shame at thus being detected, I grasped the hand of my boyhood friend, for Leonard Palmer had changed but little in ten years, and even if he had failed in realizing his dream of self-betterment and had returned as the prodigal son had done, he was once my chum and paramount friend.

The gray streaks of light in the eastern horizon, warning of approaching dawn, were visible before the joy of our reunion would permit our minds to dwell on any other subject.

But human weakness will eventually assert itself and, excusing myself by explain-

ing that I would order breakfast to be served in the room, I called the editor of a local paper and, after a brief explanation, asked him to call for me at the hotel, then returned to the room, where we partook of breakfast.

For the purpose of added effect we again drew cards to see who should be the first to tell of his experience, and Father Douglas, as we shall now call him, won first honor.

It was warm in the room, and Father Douglas had discarded his collar, and when drawing his handkerchief from his pocket preparatory to wiping the perspiration from his face a singular incident happened. A playing-card dropped from beneath his clothing and fell face downward on the floor at his feet.

Leonard and I both jested him about having a deck of cards in his pocket, but I noticed when he stooped to pick up the card his hand trembled, and when he exposed the card to view his face assumed an ashen hue and he seemed on the point of collapse, but quickly regained his self-control.

I glanced at the card, and an exclamation of surprise escaped my lips. It was the "Queen of Diamonds."

"There is not much to tell," he began, "but on the night that marked the beginning of our determination for self-betterment I drew the slip of paper marked 'Dominion of Canada,' and without delay I went directly to Quebec, where I immediately secured a position as a salesman for a reliable concern.

"I took up the study of the Gospel in conjunction with my work, was later ordained a priest, and was given a parish in Quebec, where I have remained ever since, except when my duty called me elsewhere on short trips. I have become accustomed to and am contented with my life, for it was God's will."

Then I, in turn, told of my experience, of my wife, and son, and business, but not once did I mention Q. O. D. or tell of his nefarious crimes, for I had decided that there was a connection, if I could but find the missing link, between the phantom genius and the playing-card that had been so prominent in this affair of the past ten years, the Queen of Diamonds.

The dropping of the playing-card from under Father Douglas's coat had its effect on my thoughts. Not that I believed he knew any more than we about the origin of the card, but, owing to the condition of my mind, sane deductions could be led astray by jumping at conclusions. Therefore, for the present I would put all thoughts of the mystery out of my mind and listen to the experience of Leonard while we were in exile. I expected to hear a lengthy story of misfortune, but this pleasure was denied us, temporarily at least. But before he had time to tell his story the door of the room was forcibly thrown open and a score of reporters, relatives and friends came pellmell into the room, led by Edith Cromwell, who with one sweep of her eyes nodded a welcome to me and Father Douglas. She stopped when she saw Leonard Palmer.

As she surveyed him tears came to her eyes. She seemed to realize that her waiting had been in vain, that he had failed. But she bravely held out her hands and went to him. Palmer showed every indication of abject misery.

For several days afterward I was kept busy by my immediate family and the friends of bygone days. The rumor reached me that Edith had conquered her pride and that her engagement to Leonard would be announced at a reception and dinner at the home of her parents the following Thursday evening.

CHAPTER FIVE

SHORTLY after dinner on the evening of the reception, and while I was standing on the veranda smoking a cigar, I heard a half-stifled scream and then a dull sound like a body falling on the floor. I ran into the library, where the guests were standing around a huddled body on the floor and talking in excited voices.

Pushing my way through the ring of guests, I knelt beside the unconscious body of Father Douglas, who, with an expres-

sion of abject terror on his face, was lying partly on his side, with one arm doubled up under his body. Picking him up gently, I laid him on a lounge, and while one of the guests went for a doctor I made him as comfortable as possible. In so doing I discovered a playing-card clasped tightly in one hand. I extracted it, and, with cold chills of apprehension racing down my back, I read aloud the following words printed across the card, which was the "Queen of Diamonds":

"Your Last Hour—Will You Confess, Or Shall I denounce You?—Dranoel."

The explosion of a bombshell could not have wrought more havoc in my mind than the meaning of those words. The one thing that held me spellbound was the name—"Dranoel."

"How that name rang in my ears! Dranoel of Scotland Yard there in the room! It sounded incredible, for there were none present but invited guests. On the other hand, there was the card proclaiming his presence.

Then I smiled. A thought had passed through my mind. All I had to do was to ask for an interview with the last addition to the corps of servants and unmask Dranoel.

I was on the point of putting the plan into execution when with a low moan Father Douglas sat bolt upright on the lounge, and as his eyes rested on me the look of fear returned to his face. With great effort he held up his hands, as if to ward off a blow, and in a quavering voice he said:

"My sins have been found out, and I must atone for them. Material things pass away, but one must answer to God for his sins and confess them if he desires to live after death."

We were startled, and he went on:

"I have sinned; God knows that I have sinned; therefore, to atone for my sins, I must confess them before man. To begin, I confess that I am the notorious bank robber, known to the world as Q. O. D."

He paused for a moment and allowed his eyes to travel over the faces of the guests, and evidently feeling reassured at the intense silence that greeted this confession, he continued:

"First, I will tell you of the motive that led me to sin, and you shall judge whether I was justified when I tell you that I never used so much as one cent of the money that I have stolen.

"I burned it all, money and bonds, to the last cent, for my motive was not gain, but justice by destruction.

"As I told you, when I arrived in Quebec I secured a position as a salesman, but as you did not ask, I did not tell you what I was selling. The company's business was the manufacture of safes, vaults, etc., and it was the salesman's duty after a sale to see that the safe or vault was properly installed and that the mechanism of the combination was in perfect working order.

"I became an expert in the business, and had it not been for a great desire to become a priest, which seized me a few years later, and also for an incident that happened in Wall Street, I would in all probability have made a wonderful success in the safe business.

"As you all know, my father was a wealthy banker and capitalist up to five years ago, and was, I firmly believe, as honest a broker as there was on Wall Street. He never took advantage or knowingly cheated his business associates. Therefore, when one of his friends came to him and explained that he was in great financial danger and asked for help to save his fortune, my father unhesitatingly placed his own large fortune at this man's disposal, without security.

"It was the old story of trusting a friend—his fortune was wiped out. Not a dollar remained of the once great fortune.

"My father was unable to stand the sting of poverty, was too old to attempt to start over again, and committed suicide. My mother, brokenhearted at his death, soon died, and it was long afterwards before I learned that I was an orphan.

"After learning of the catastrophe I at once came to New York in disguise, made a thorough investigation, and learned that my

father had been deceived by his supposed friend, and that it was a prearranged affair to swindle my father out of his fortune.

"I sifted the facts from the mountain of evidence I secured and found and identified seven banking institutions that were responsible for my father's failure. Therefore they were responsible for his death.

"I returned to Quebec, firmly determined that their ill-gotten plunder would burn before my eyes and by my hand.

"As you well know, one by one they fell, and on each occasion they found a card bearing the initials 'Q. O. D.,' which I took as a good omen from the last card drawn on a memorable night ten years ago. I hoped the card would strike terror to their hearts when they realized that a nemesis hovered near.

"I never had the least idea that my identity had been detected until I stepped into the seventh and last vault on the night that my ten years' exile ended. Before my eyes, posted in a conspicuous place for my especial benefit, was the 'Queen of Diamonds.'

"I knew then that it was only a matter of time before I would be denounced. But I did not care, for when I entered the room an hour later an old and broken man, the room I had left ten years ago young, full of life and hope, I felt that I had collected just what was due me.

"Each added act, the dropping of the card from beneath my coat, the finding of this card in my pocket, only hastened the inevitable moment when I must confess my sins before man, and I have no regr-e-t—"

His voice trailed off into an inaudible whisper, his head sank forward onto his breast, and he would have fallen had I not caught him and laid him gently back on the lounge. As I noticed the glazed stare in his eyes I realized that the physical strain that he had labored under for the past five years had exacted its toll. Father Douglas had gone before a higher tribunal of justice.

It was hours later, and after Father Douglas's earthly remains had been removed, before quiet was restored in the library. But it was only for a moment. Excitement burst forth again when a man whom I had not noticed before stepped to the middle of the library and asked for our attention.

"I will introduce myself by saying that I am the chief of detectives of this city. It is not of myself that I shall speak, but rather of another of my profession.

"I refer to the man who is known to you as 'Dranoel of Scotland Yard,' England, who is at this minute in your midst."

Instantly I looked about, peering into the faces of all the male guests, expecting to encounter the stony features of the wizard of criminology. But the speaker went on:

"Inspector Dranoel arrived in New York one week ago to-day, but before his arrival he had practically solved the mystery of Q. O. D., and in twenty-four hours after his arrival he could have identified the man who had robbed the seven banks.

"But Inspector Dranoel preferred to permit the perpetrator to confess his crimes and to prove to you that he was right in identifying the criminal. It was Inspector Dranoel who was responsible for the appearance of the Queen of Diamonds at the bank, but he did not know that the plunder stolen from the vaults was burned. If he had the last robbery would have been prevented, for in that robbery the card was placed in the vault with the consent of the president of the bank. It was done to positively identify Q. O. D. and to force him to confess through the 'power of suggestion' that his identity was known."

Again the speaker paused, while the guests waited in almost intolerable silence for him to continue.

"That is all, except, in order for you to identify the ace of criminology of modern times, who is in your midst, spell the name 'Dranoel' backward and you will understand."

With the speed of electricity it flashed through my mind—"D-R-A-N-O-E-L—L-E-O-N-A-R-D."

But before I could collect my scattered wits I heard a feminine voice choking in emotional happiness and saw Edith Cromwell pointing wildly at Leonard Palmer.

"You — you — Dranoel of Scotland Yard!" she gasped, and the next moment he had her in his arms."

The Fingerprint in Commerce

By BENJAMIN CALL

IT is really not many years ago since the knowledge that the fingerprints of an individual are a sure mark of identity, and a good many people still think that the Bertillon system of measuring the bony structure of an individual is an infallible means of identification. The truth is that the moment fingerprinting comes to the attention of criminal hunters the Bertillon system, with its elaborate and difficult mechanism, is immediately scrapped.

The newspapers, however, have made the reading public familiar with fingerprinting, in as far as it is used in hunting down and identifying the criminal. Even business men, who keep a close watch on all the newest developments of efficiency, seldom realize the extent to which this new science of personal identification is creeping into their sphere.

The first enormous institutions of this country to take up the fingerprinting of their personnel were the army and navy. This was started before we were actually in the World War, and the result was that even with the appalling lists of casualties that began to roll up the "unidentified dead" was reduced to practically nothing. A man might lose his identification tag and every shred of clothing and even, as dreadfully happened, have his face blown off, but if he had the fingers of one hand left, and even if the flesh of those fingers were decomposed, the fingerprint experts could peel off the skin and get "prints" from that.

For this reason there were almost none of the heartbreaking tragedies during that war that have always been the greatest of such catastrophies, the tragedies in which the man is simply tagged "missing."

The next step taken nationally was for the postal savings department to require all depositors to be identified by means of their fingerprints. This has already done much to eliminate the persistent frauds and substitutions that were formerly so frequent in this branch of the national service.

Banks are now falling into line, thirty-one banks in Chicago alone now using this method of identification.

Big steel and iron mills have continued to use this method since the time they were turning out super quantities of their products during the war. At that period they learned that the only sure way to keep the enemy alien out of his spy and damage work in their employ was to fingerprint all employees and to check up on them at unexpected intervals. The favorite "stunt" of these enemy aliens, more or less employed by enemy governments, was to get some perfectly good employee to allow them to change places. This was often done by pleading, and sometimes by blackmailing the one for whom they wished to substitute, and frequently by bribing. The fingerprint process stopped this off short, and since the war the fact that these large industrial plants employ many whose names are hard to write, and still more difficult to pronounce, has led them to number their employees and to make fingerprints the identifying medium.

In Chicago they are finding that the use of the fingerprint in the civil service is stopping a persistent fraud which has always gone on, which is that of substituting one person for another, to the detriment of the service. The procedure would be about as follows:

A man made application and learned the time when he would have to take his exam-

inations. Being totally unable to take them, he would look about for a man who resembled him in a general way and who had the proper education. He would pay that man for the impersonation, and the examinations would be successfully passed; then the first man would appear and take the position, for which, of course, he had not the requirewents in any way.

A great many commercial houses whose employees do not speak English are now following the lead of the steel and iron plants by requiring that all persons employed by them shall be identified by their fingerprints. One of the reasons why this has proven so successful is that it has checked the curious disposition on the part of the lower class Europeans to employ a whole family on one job, to the loss of the employer, because of the varying degrees of skill. It is obviously impossible for the time-keepers to know by sight the thousands who pour past them morning and evening, and even foremen, with men under them whose language and general bearing is foreign, can easily mistake one for another. So that Tony—we will say—will work on a job for two days and then go off to loaf (and let his wife pay for a good deal of his necessities with the money that she gets for washing), while the brother Joe comes off from *his* loafing period and shows up at the plant as Tony. Since fingerprinting was taken up in one well-known plant the astonished managers discovered that in one family four brothers had for two years been on the payroll as one.

Substitution is not only a great let-down on the work, but induces the alien worker to lead the lazy and shiftless life which prevents him and his family from getting into the spirit of the country to which he has come, and which he or his children will eventually belong.

The Mercantile Trust Company of St. Louis have a special advertisement which they have broadcasted, which says:

"The fingerprint method identifies positively. When a patron wishes to open a savings account this method of identification is used. Fingerprints are taken on our signature cards, as shown; mark is made and witnessed; then the card is placed on file by us. When a patron wishes to withdraw his money his fingerprints are taken on a withdrawal slip. This, comparing favorably with the original card, furnishes perfect identification. Adoption of this is in line with the efforts of this firm to give every known form of protection to its patrons' money."

One of the by-products of the fingerprint world is the nose-printing of cattle as a precaution against "rustlers." There was a loud laugh all over the cattle country when this item first appeared in the newspapers, but after a number of ranches having high-grade cattle had used it, to prevent the substituting of inferior cattle during exhibitions, and while away from the ranch for breeding purposes, a good many other ranchers decided that it was worth consideration. It was proven that the "noseprint" *of every individual animal is different from any other individual.* Half of the trouble, when cows are purloined, is to prove that they have been stolen. Brands can be very successfully altered, but the noseprint cannot, not by any system whatever.

Hospitals where maternity cases are frequent are rapidly fingerprinting and "toeprinting" mother and child, the foot and toe of the new-born infant being used, instead of the hand, because of the extraordinary tenacity with which the child closes its small fist, making it all but impossible to get a "print." So far as the "patterns" of the fingers are concerned, they are exactly the same, on foot and hand, *from the cradle to the grave.*

This decision to positively identify the new-born child has grown out of the many distressing cases in maternity hospitals, in which mothers have declared that when the new-born infant was taken away from them to be washed and dressed in a room where other infants were undergoing the same process, there was a substitution, unintentional, but none the less positive. One case last year, in which the young mother declared that she had given birth to a girl, when the hospital authorities declared that the boy they returned to her after its first bath was hers, was especially productive in

bringing the attention of the hospital world to this condition.

The young mother has absolutely refused to accept the child which is said to be hers, and is pining so much that it is feared she will die. Whether the hospital authorities know that such a substitution unwittingly took place, or whether they are right and the mother is the victim of a delusion, the fact remains that unless the child had been "printed" there is now no possible way by which the truth can ever be established.

Doctor Copeland, formerly of the New York Health Board, has done a great deal to bring this most important matter to the attention of hospitals all over the country.

The case recently before the courts, in which the authenticity of an old master was sought to be established by means of a thumbprint shows which way the wind is blowing. It is said that two well-known landscape painters are now deliberately affixing their "signatures" to their canvases, the same being their thumbprint, having it verified before a notary and placed on file with lawyers.

Why the railways and the insurance companies have not long since taken to fingerprinting their employees is a matter for amazement. The cost to the insurance companies of the elaborate systems by which they seek to prevent fraud being practiced on them, and the ease and frequency with which all these systems are evaded by criminals, is known to every one. We can hardly pick up a newspaper without reading that some supposedly dead man, on whom the insurance sum has been paid, has appeared, very much alive, or that the insurance companies are searching for some "widow" who they have found to have gotten a "husband's" money on quite a different man.

Just having the fingerprints of any insured person taken, verified by a notary and filed with the company, would at once do away with the whole business, and when a body is produced the "prints" would at once show the individual's identity.

No doubt this is the next great step in the commercializing of this great scientific discovery.

The railways also ought to take up an interlocking system of fingerprint records, since without it the hobo railroader, a menace to the public and a great detriment to the railways, can shift back and forth from one road to another under different names. If, through stupidity, carelessness or bad habits, he has caused a serious accident on one line, he can change his name, shave off his mustache and go a hundred miles away and get work. More than that, he can often go a hundred miles off with a shift of name and appearance and secure employment on the very line from which he has just been discharged in disgrace.

Railway associations and railway men are inclined to deny that this can be done, but newspapers tell the tale, as any one can see by noting how many times, when there have been large or small accidents, that the man responsible "turns up missing," and also how often the previous record of such a man seems wrapped in mystery.

The thief who specializes on getting a job in the freight department of the railway, and from that vantage-point steals valuable cargo, is with us by the thousands. Police records from all over the country show that fully two-thirds of the enormous amount of thefts that occur in the railway system by which the public is the loser, as well as the railways, are committed by employees. These crooks have served many a jail sentence and then returned to work for the very line which they robbed, having changed their names and appearance. They are, of course, armed with forged recommendations.

The question of establishing identity is often an awkward one, as any person who has ever been stranded in a strange city with no money, but with checks and money orders, can testify.

If the whole population were fingerprinted and this system was in vogue, there would never be any difficulty about checks or money orders! Just take that in, for a moment. There would not be the possibility of a bad check. Why? Because the fingerprint of the drawer would be on it. When it was presented, anywhere in the country, the verification of that check, through a code which is now in use, would

take only half an hour; in the case of local conditions, only the time to telephone.

A humorous incident occurred recently in Philadelphia. A man who was an ex-convict found himself in that city with a perfectly good check and no other money, but there was not a person in the city to vouch for him, and no bank would cash the check. He was really in desperate straits, and a bright thought occurred to him. He went to police headquarters, where he knew his "prints" were and, grinning, asked if he could be identified by means of them. The F. P. E. (fingerprint experts always refer to themselves by these initials) grinned, too, and cheerfully furnished the evidence, sending a man along to a bank to see that the check was accepted.

The odd thing is that any criminal, having served his term and having nothing to fear from the police, can go to them as this man did and have his identity established. So far, an honest man cannot do that, but the time is surely coming when this wonderful system will be used to simplify the many intricacies of our commercial lives.

COUNTERFEIT MONEY

"A MAN had better have a live rattlesnake in his pocket than a counterfeit dollar carried as a pocket-piece," said an inspector of the Treasury Department, talking about the carrying of coins or bills which one knows to be counterfeit.

"A great many men don't know the danger they run in this thing," he said. "Suppose, for instance, that a man has a counterfeit dollar which he has had for years, one that he has picked up somewhere and carries as a pocket-piece. He goes into a store one day and buys some article or other and gets a lot of silver coin in change. He goes from the store, say to a near-beer saloon, where he buys a drink, or to some drugstore to get something or other—it matters not where he goes, provided there is one of those smart young fellows behind the counter who is always ready to take somebody up on something or other.

"Paying for his purchase with one of the dollars, the man behind the bar or the counter, as the case may be, flings the dollar back with the remark that it is counterfeit. The purchaser, somewhat abashed and not liking the eying of the crowd around, begins to make excuses to the effect that he did not know it was counterfeit and so on, and the clerk, who is anxious to make a record as a counterfeit detective, suddenly calls in the police and the man is arrested. On his person is found the other counterfeit dollar, and the possession of the $2 is prima facie evidence that he intended to pass both of them, and that man hasn't got enough friends in the world to keep him out of the penitentiary. True, it looks hard, but that man had no business carrying around a counterfeit coin for a pocket-piece or any other reason. It is a plain violation of the law to carry counterfeit money about with you.

"Suppose I happen to know that a man, a cashier in one of the well-known banks of Minneapolis or St. Paul, for instance, has a counterfeit $20 dollar bill in his possession. I go into that bank and I call him by name and ask him for that bill. He says he hasn't got it. 'But,' I rejoin, 'you did have such a bill yesterday in your possession, for I have the testimony of two reputable men that they saw you show it around to some parties. Now I want that bill; you have no business with it.' He demurs and makes various excuses and does not give me any satisfaction. What do you suppose I do? I go out and get a search warrant and go through every dollar of money in that bank, dollar by dollar, or bill by bill, until I find that counterfeit $20 bill, and then I confiscate it. There used to be no law against this sort of thing, but there is one now, and the public generally ought to know the facts in the case. And formerly it was not an offense to make the dies which are used in counterfeiting—anybody could make them and anybody could have them in his possession, so long as they were not used, but that is all changed now.

Point-Blank

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

CHAPTER ONE

THE Omaha Kid, lip lifting from his stained and broken teeth, as a trapped animal grins at the hunters, swung into North Clark street from Illinois.

He had come in over the C., M. & S. P. that morning from St. Paul and had been "flying light," meaning that he had no breakfast since the morning of the day previous. And the lake breeze, howling among the canyons, was like a breath of Arctic ice.

"Chi" had never been a lucky place for the Omaha Kid, for it was there, as he had reason to remember, that he had hit the soapy chutes with a momentum that had brought him down in the scale to what he had become—a pariah among the flotsam and jetsam of the dwellers-by-night.

Built like a pocket Hercules—"a colossus in a capsule," as one imaginative sports writer had illiteratively phrased it—the Omaha Kid had been in a fair way to fame and fortune in the squared circle until one memorable evening they had "got him with the goods." For the fight that night had been just "one of those things," with the Omaha Kid as master of ceremonies in as glaring a piece of hippodroming as had been attempted within the memory of the oldest fight fan.

He had been ruled out of the fight game for life; the commission had seen to that. And thereafter he had gone down and down, achieving at last the crowning infamy; the mob of strong-arms with which he had of late consorted had thrown him out; he had escaped with his life barely, and that was all.

And the word had gone out in alley and purlieu, hang-out and blind-pig:

"Lay off the Omaha Kid."

For the Kid was a bent twig, as crooked as a ram's horn, as devious as a crooked stick, warped and twisted with evil and the fruit of evil. Now, as he mooched sullenly along the crowded street—it was mid-morning—he cursed low, under his breath, a bitter, brooding malediction. For he was broke and desperate. Weaponless—for he had long since disposed of the automatic with which he had never been without—he was at a loose end in very truth.

For the Omaha Kid put no confidence in any other weapon than a pistol. Knuckle-dusters, life-preservers, a length of lead pipe even, wrapped in a section of burlap—these were not his tools. The "gat," as he would have called it—it must be a gat or nothing.

He could have battered for his three square meals at back doorways of suburban cottages, and, in effect, he had essayed it, only to find the doors slammed abruptly in his face, the sight of which had been enough, and more than enough, for the house owners. Or perhaps it had been his eyes, furtive, pale, glowing, deep down, with a chill, corrosive flame.

Now, if he only had a gun, he told himself, he would make it work for him. His shifting gaze, lifting a moment to his right, came to rest upon the show-window of a gun store just across. Beside him on the pavement there was a pile of bricks; workmen had left it there in preparation for the day's activity.

The Omaha Kid straightened, his pig eyes alight with sudden anticipation. He bent, made a half turn, and then, out of the

tail of his eye, he saw it—the looming figure of a patrolman, the sunlight winking on the brass buttons, club dangling suggestively from one huge, hairy hand.

The Omaha Kid's groping fingers slid backward with the speed of light. The officer, gazing at him under lowered brows, came forward, swinging his club, his glance, in a quick, suspicious appraisal, upon the ragged overcoat, the face with the hunted eyes and the tight-lipped, sullen mouth.

But the Omaha Kid, standing not upon the order of his going, melted into the traffic stream flowing southward to the river. He followed it a little way, head lowered, chin sunk in the collar of his overcoat, until, at the corner of Adams and South Clark streets, he glanced upward abruptly, his gaze in a brooding speculation upon the bank building on the corner.

It was the Commercial National.

The traffic stream had thinned out a trifle; at this hour of the morning—ten o'clock—the bank would be empty or nearly so; empty, that is, of customers, but there would be money there—cash, gold and notes—sufficient and more than sufficient for a king's ransom, say, or for the ransom of the Omaha Kid.

The Kid knew banks, and there was something else that he knew: in a little while now they would be busy with the payrolls, and that meant that there would be money, and a lot of it, in compact bundles—thousands and tens of thousands, and most of it within easy reaching distance of the quick thrust of nimble fingers, the fingers, as it might chance, of the Omaha Kid.

The bank was under guard, of course. Glancing over his shoulder, the Kid could see the traffic man at the corner; farther along, as he well knew, even if he could not see them, would be the usual sprinkling of plain-clothesmen by twos and threes, idling along the curb.

Turning on his heel, he sauntered slowly up the steps and in at the bank door. Close at hand—so close that he could have reached out and touched it—was money, cut off from him merely by a narrow barrier of steel and stone. But it might as well have been a fortress, which in effect it was.

Perhaps, indeed, he had come into that bank for the same reason that a man will linger at a shop window with no intent and less ability to buy. Now, as he went forward slowly, a clerk at a wicket just across had ceased a moment in the act of counting over a packet of banknotes; the Omaha Kid could see their saffron edges and the printed slip circled with a rubber band. On it were the numerals 1000.

And even as he watched a red-faced man with a square jaw and the cold blue eye of a fighter appeared suddenly at the teller's elbow from behind. He whispered something to the official which the Kid could not catch; then, with a movement soundless and swift, he had drawn and deposited upon the counter, so that its muzzle pointed straight at the Omaha Kid, a blue-steel automatic.

The teller, intent upon his labors, listened with only half his ears. The red-faced man, turning at a call from the far end of the cage, had disappeared.

And in that moment the crook had acted.

The distance from the teller's wicket to the doorway was scarcely greater than ten feet. The Omaha Kid waited a split second, his eyes about him all ways at once. The gray-clad "Special" was rounding the corner of the long cage; his broad back was toward the entrance. The Kid chose that moment for his sortie. In two swift, silent strides he had covered the space between, his lean hand thrust forward like a striking snake. The teller, looking up, found himself gazing into the muzzle of the pistol which but a moment before had lain ready to his hand.

His face grayed, fingers upon that packet of bills, as the harsh whisper reached him, incisive, like a summons of doom.

"Th' jack, bo; I want it—*quick!*"

The pale eyes in the sinister face were boring into his as the teller, with fingers that trembled, thrust forward the money through the wicket. There was another gun, and it was in the drawer just under his hand, but it might as well have been anywhere but where it was. The Kid, his face bleak, eyes narrowed to slits, was into

and through the doorway at a plunging rush even as, at his back, the red-faced man was sprinting between the high desks. He called something as he ran to the gray-coated special, who, rounding the corner of the cage nearest the door, uprose abruptly in the fugitive's path.

They met in the entrance. The Omaha Kid, with a sneering grin, ducked under the wide sweep of the locust in the policeman's hand, uppercut him savagely a lifting blow full on the point of his chin. And there was power in it.

The special grunted, collapsing like an empty bag, as the crook, like a plunging half-back going through a broken field, was in the crowd and of it.

The traffic man on the corner turned as the red-faced marshal, hurdling the steps, shouted high above the clang and rattle. But the Omaha Kid, turning and doubling like a fox, dove, as a swimmer dives, into the swirl and eddy of the hurrying crowd, behind him, perhaps twenty paces in the rear, the red-faced man, weaponless, in close pursuit.

CHAPTER TWO

THE red-faced man was Hardesty, a Cook County marshal, and a gunfighter before that in Cheyenne and in Tai Juana. He had been about to explain the mechanism of his "pocket-piece," as he called it, to the teller, when he had been called away just long enough for the Omaha Kid to have accomplished his coup.

It was characteristic of the marshal that, empty-handed, he had raced after the flying figure of the fugitive, with no thought of the odds against him in a hand-to-hand encounter with a man whom he knew to be desperate, with the vicious, cold courage of a striking rattler—fanged, too, like the rattler, with his weapon of death.

The marshal had known the Omaha Kid upon the instant. He grinned now with cryptic humor as he rushed forward along the crowded street.

Ahead of him, distant perhaps half a block, he could see the peaked cap of the fugitive, the short, flaring overcoat. The Omaha Kid, hard-pressed, was running now as a fox coursing before hounds.

He might have picked up a taxi from the curb but for the closeness of the pursuit. But there was an alley just ahead; he made it a second before the marshal, who, caught in a traffic jam at the corner of the street, was halted, fuming, just long enough to widen the gap between them.

And in that flash of time the Omaha Kid, wheeling sharply to his right, had traversed the short length of the alley at a crouching run, turned again westward; then, slowing abruptly to a stiff-legged walk, he grinned, as a fox grins, without mirth.

But there was no safe place where he might go.

The railroads would be watched, yard and station; already, as he knew, word had gone out to look for him at the terminals.

A pariah even among crooks, the Omaha Kid, safe as he might have been at the moment, was in desperate straits. That marshal had known him; sooner or later he would find him, even if he had not already picked up the trail.

There was Dutchman Charlie's, where, as the Kid well knew, his welcome would be the welcome of slungshot or iron fist; Looie's, where the Stock Yards Dusters would see to it that he would never again come forth. Everywhere it would be the same.

Walking rapidly now, the Omaha Kid, with a vicious lifting of the lip, cursed them all impartially under his breath, while behind him, at that alley's mouth, the marshal, with scarcely an abatement of his stride, wheeled, as the fugitive had done, plunging into the dimness straight ahead.

The Kid, by now in a dank purlieu where even at high noon the sunlight penetrated with a flat, toneless radiance, walked warily, arms close at his sides, eyes under narrowed lids scanning the mean houses on either hand, until——

"Gee!" he abruptly exclaimed under his breath.

For there was a mean house in a mean street, like a festering sore upon the city's

night life, foul and old, with shuttered windows like blind eyes to the night. "The Dirty Spoon," as it was called, was ostensibly an abode of blind beggars, comrades in a curious fellowship, but it was also a hang-out for "heels" and dips. At any other time the Omaha Kid would have shunned it with contempt. Now it was the one place he could go.

It was a street of shadows and dim lights, like wavering witch-fires out of the blackness, even by day. Pushing open a door that hung crazily on a single hinge, he found himself in a hallway, foul and dark, even at high noon. He went upward now, climbing the creaking stair, his hand before him in the dimness feeling along the wall.

Just prior to his entry there had sounded an odd, fumbling scuffle, like the squeak and scurry of rats in the wainscot, but he mounted the creaking flight in a thick silence and darkness now that was like a vault.

At the stair-head, where he could tell by feeling rather than by sight that there was a door, he gave a curious, rubbing knock. There came a whispering behind the door, like the hiss and patter of rain upon dry leaves, and then—he had not heard that door open—the beam of a flashlight struck him between the eyes; he blinked as a voice sounded from the darkness:

"O.K. It's th' Kid! Judas Priest!"

The flash died as a gas-jet, sputtering in the draft, ran upward from a pale bead to a singeing flame. The door closed behind him without sound as, standing by the doorway, he surveyed the gathering, a half dozen altogether: Fatty, Denver Pink, Goat Hinch—they stared back at him in a keen-eyed silence that had in it a measure of swift, sullen appraisal.

The Omaha Kid sensed this even as he spoke.

"Lissen here, you guns," he said, "there's a dick; he's after me, see? But I slipped him th' works; I frisked him f'r his rod—get me?"

He palmed the pistol as a conjurer before an audience, then dropped it in his pocket.

"Now, we'll frame it like this."

His voice fell to a purring rumble. He would stay there for the night, he told them; after that—well, it would be easy; there were more ways than one of making his getaway.

But while he talked they watched him, mostly in silence. They would help him if they could, but the Omaha Kid was "bad"; besides that, he was in wrong with the highmobsmen of the clans; they would be relieved to see the last of him.

And as he talked the Kid looked at them each in turn, his gaze resting finally upon a man with a criss-cross scar running from eyebrow to chin, who, sitting silent in a corner, gazed steadily at the newcomer under lowered lids.

There was a veiled gleaming in his eyes, like the sun on water. So far he had contributed nothing to the conversation, his lean, hard-bitten, vulpine face, with its trap-like mouth, an enigmatic mask.

Now he rose lightly to his feet, as a cat moves, soundless and swift, yawning behind his hand. Going to the window, he drew the heavy shade, peering a moment into the street. This was Goat Hinch, gangster, and damper-getter (till thief) by trade, and, it had been whispered, a something more.

"Well, so long, you guys," he said lazily. "See you later."

He had reached the door when the Omaha Kid, with a lightning movement, was on his feet.

Rumors, vague and uncorroborated, had reached him in the past that Hinch was not all he seemed; that he was in effect a stool-pigeon, an informer, a spy, who, in exchange for police immunity, bartered the secrets of his mob. But it had never been proven.

Now, as the lean figure, hand upon the door-knob, grinned backward in farewell, the Kid had his hand in his pocket. His face bleak, his hand came up and outward with the speed of light, in it the heavy pistol, jamming it against the tall man's ribs. Then he bit off the words with a sort of snarling violence:

"You—Hinch—you stay here! You make me? I would—if I was you."

For a moment it seemed that the man called Hinch was hesitating; he looked at the others and away. The pale eyes flickered, the mouth a thin, bodeful line. Then:

"Oh, all right, Kid," he said. "If you put it that way."

He grinned wryly out of the corner of his mouth as the Omaha Kid, the gun held rigid as a rock, moved backward two stiff, mincing steps. Then, as the tall man went slowly to his seat, he pocketed the pistol, his eyes on a sudden gray-green, like a cat's.

A step had sounded on the stair; some one was coming up.

CHAPTER THREE

THE marshal, acting upon instinct rather than suspicion, rounding that alley corner, had picked up the fugitive's trail at the next turning, following him onward into the network of mean streets branching westward, deeper and deeper, into the heart of a place in which a man might drop out of sight as a stone is dropped into green waters of oblivion.

He could have drawn level with his quarry at any moment now, and it was not fear of the bandit's pistol which kept him, perhaps a half block in the rear, matching his pace now to the quick, striding shuffle of the fugitive.

The man before him, furtive, slinking like a jungle beast between the high walls, might lead him, as the marshal had reason to believe, to where, as it might chance, he might uncover evidence of value; anything was possible. That was good police procedure. And of the ultimate result he had not a moment's doubt.

But as he halted at the corner of the street he saw the dim shadow that was the Kid; a moment it showed like a black dot out of the dimness; then, like a sliding ghost, it was gone, between two ticks of the watch.

This was something for which the marshal had not bargained. He knew that tenement, malodorous in fact as well as in name; it was a matter for the reserves and not for one man alone, for the odds would be a thousand to one that he would ever make it.

And he was unarmed.

In all that chase he had met not a single patrolman, and if he should turn aside for reinforcements the odds would be a little better than even that the fox would seize that moment for his getaway. It was a problem for a Solomon.

The marshal knew what manner of men lived in that tenement with the closed and bolted shutters: furtive, cowardly creatures of the shadow; men indeed only in outward seeming—snowbirds, burnee-snuffers, rascals of the city jungle. And yet they were deadly, dangerous, adepts in ambush with the knife or pistol.

A man would indeed come carrying his life in his hands were he to venture within that darkened doorway, armed or not, courageous or not. And the marshal was weaponless, as we have said.

He stood a moment now upon the opposite curb, frowning under lowered brows. The marshal had seen death in the old time; his name had been known the length and breadth of the border in the days when a man's cold courage was his passport to life—and to death. And as he stood there something flamed in him like a fire in dry grass; his jaw muscles tightened with the thought.

His quarry was not aware that he was unarmed.

As a swimmer poising upon a springboard above crested seas, the marshal, standing upon the curbstone, drew a deep, gathering breath. Then he was across the street and in at the door.

And as he went he had an impression, seen in an eyeflash, as a curtain was drawn swiftly from right to left. He saw a lean, hard-bitten countenance; it had peered at him for a moment from a window just above, finger crooked in a swift, fleeting gesture. And the face was the face of the jackal—Hinch.

The marshal had known the man, and he knew, too, something that the Omaha Kid and those others of his ilk as yet merely suspected: the fellow really was a stool, an

informer, a spy in the interest of the department. But such men were experts in the double-cross, trusted of no man and bestowing upon no man their trust.

Now, as he went upward, feeling along the wall, he was abruptly conscious, even as the fugitive had been, of whispers, rustlings; out of the tail of his eye, as he had gone forward, he had seen, or thought that he had seen, a movement like the flicker of a wind-blown leaf. He heard, out of the encircling darkness, the pad-pad of a swift, stealthy footfall and the faint breathing of a man.

Abruptly a hand, cold and moist, like the hand of a dead man, closed about his wrist; a voice hissed in his ear with a sudden violence:

"At the stair-head, mister; you count twenty, see, an' that'll be th' door, but—you watch your step!"

Hardesty, whirling, reached forward a detaining hand, but the owner of the voice had vanished. Or, rather, it was as if he had never been there. And the voice itself—it had been like the voice of a dead man or of a man dwelling in a tomb, and upon the instant the marshal knew it for what it was—the thick whisper of one who walked ever in darkness because he was—blind.

"You count twenty." That would be the blind beggar's way. And of a sudden the marshal was remembering the beggar at the corner of Adams and South Clark streets; he had never failed in passing to pay toll to the sightless guardian of the corner. Now, somehow, as it seemed, the fellow had remembered him! For the voice was the same, as he had heard it, there and here.

But that hand, clammy and cold—its touch was on his wrist, as he went upward, like the belly of a snake. And as to what he would meet there in that warren just above—well, he told himself grimly, if he wouldn't have given a penny for his chances, he was *paid* to take them.

The marshal had no plan save that of action. Unarmed, it would be suicide to adventure boldly against that room and what he might find in it; brave as he was, the marshal was aware of that. Under the circumstances discretion were the better part of valor.

But he could at least discover, if he could, as to how many there might be there in that room. The Omaha Kid had preceded him by a scant five minutes; the bandit would scarcely have had time, even if he thought of it, to prepare for any possible attack in force. And again, at the thought, the marshal smiled grimly in the darkness, his hand before him on the mouldy banister sliding upward to the door.

There was a line of light under that door; he could see it now, whereas before it had been invisible. The marshal, crouching on the balls of his feet, stood silent, listening, holding his breath. But from within there came no sound, no sign. Then, so quickly that he was thrown off his balance, the door fell inward. There came a snarling voice as the marshal, upon his hands and knees, looked up to face an encircling savage ring—grim faces, eyes with the abyssmal, cold cruelty of death itself.

CHAPTER FOUR

"WELCOME to our city, Mister Dick! Now, we've got you—an' we've got you—*right!*"

The Omaha Kid, gun out, stared downward at the officer, who, still on his hands and knees, observed the bandit in silence. Behind the Kid the others were closing in now as wolves narrowing their fell circle before the kill. The sands were running out; in a moment now would come the end.

The marshal read it in the bleak staring in the eyes downbent to his, the hardening of the grim mouths. On his knees in a posture curiously suggestive of a sprinter upon his mark, as a boxer reads in the eyes of his antagonist the telegraphed lead, the marshal made his bid.

There came a sudden, brief explosion of movement. Palms flat upon the floor for leverage, straight upward he leaped, as a tarpon strikes, launching himself up and outward in a driving tackle, his right fist, behind it the full weight of his two hundred

pounds of iron-hard muscle, crashing full upon the Omaha Kid's jaw.

There came a straining heave, a grunt, the Kid staggered, his eyes rolled, and in that flash of time the marshal, his left hand like a striking snake, had snatched the heavy pistol. Leaping clear, the hand holding the pistol rigid as a rock, his hard eyes swept the semicircle of savage faces.

"Easy does it!" he cautioned, but beneath the silken tone there ran a hint of iron. "Easy does it!"

The Omaha Kid could "take it," but now, sullen, raging, all but out upon his feet, he turned with a snarling violence to the jackal at his elbow.

"Hinch, you cursed stool!" he grated, "I'll get you for this, as sure as Gawd! I'll get you—where you live!"

Hardesty's voice rang, stern, authoritative:

"Hinch can come clean on that, Omaha," he said. "There wasn't any tip-off, if you want to know." His tone hardened. "Now, get going!"

The marshal was a brave man, but he knew well enough that all that kept that encircling, savage ring at bay was the heavy pistol in his hand, its muzzle menacing them in a slow, sweeping arc. Before its menace they crowded backward now as, at the crisp order of the marshal, the Omaha Kid moved stiffly to obey.

The marshal flung wide the door, waving his prisoner on ahead; it closed shut behind him. They were gone.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE Omaha Kid was in the toils. The lieutenant on duty at the station grinned as the marshal, with a side glance at his prisoner, produced the blue-steel automatic, turning it over in one calloused palm.

"Well, Kid, you're out of luck—ha?" he said grimly. "And if you want to know, I'll wise you, and I hope it'll be a lesson where you're going." He grinned again fleetingly as the bandit lifted dull eyes in a fixed, brooding stare. "First off, you stole my gun; I think a lot of that gun, if you want to know; you held up the teller with it; you'd have croaked that shillaber, Hinch, if—you'd been able."

He paused. The Omaha Kid gazed at him in a sort of stupid wonder.

"If—you'd been able," continued the marshal slowly. "Then—you'd have plugged me with it—point-blank—if you'd been able. But you weren't able, Kid, because—well, because I took the gun away from you."

He paused again, eyes in a biting humor upon the bandit where he sat.

"And if it hadn't been for that pistol, Mister Omaha Kid, you wouldn't have left your friends back there in Robey street—ha? I'll say you wouldn't! Well, now, the next time you 'borrow' a gun be certain sure of one thing before you unlimber it, because—the cards were stacked against you from the first!"

With a swift, sudden movement he twirled the heavy gun; there was a click as the clip was jerked free, and then the Omaha Kid's quick oath was echoed by the lieutenant's muffled shout. The Omaha Kid slumped downward in his chair; he was done.

For, plain for all to see, there was not a single cartridge in that clip. Nor had there been. The gun was empty.

Back-Fire

By G. P. WILSON

THERE is a saying which has gone the rounds for a number of years and it is this: "Set a crook to catch a crook." I don't know who started such a rumor, but, personally, I've always figured that the police department stood a whole lot better chance of catching one of us crooks than we did of catching ourselves. I don't know. I may be wrong.

But I do know that the only time I ever got sent over the road was the time I met up with a detective who was smarter than I was, and he wasn't any crook, I'll tell the world.

Jack Smith was a square shooter, and I ain't never had any hard feelings against him, because I've always figured that if you wasn't smart enough in your own line to keep the other fellow from getting your goat, you better change your method of making an honest dime and join up with some charitable institution where the board and lodging is free. So Jack and I have become good friends. Brains recognizing brains, you understand.

Of course I can never operate in St. Louis no more, but when things get warm I can always go there and know I won't be bothered as long as I behave. Jack don't mind me playing around in his back yard as long as I don't pick up any of the children's playthings.

Last summer the "flat-feet" in New York got to taking an undue interest in me on account of several parties having mislaid valuables carelessly, you might say, and them thinking I was holding out information as to their whereabouts. They didn't have no more on me than some of these "back-to-nature" dancers wear—just a suspicion, you understand, but they were hopeful and kept gumshoeing around, so I beat it to St. Louis, where I could get some rest. I looked Jack up the first thing to save him the trouble of doing the same to me.

"You're just the man I'm looking for," he said as we shook hands. "How's the hand-writin' expert?"

"Where do you get that stuff?" I grinned. "Me and the raised check game have been perfect strangers ever since you caused me to do my bit in Sing Sing."

"Maybe," Jack said. He's smart. He knows that an old dog don't ever forget his tricks. "New York headquarters wired me that you were headed this way. They didn't have anything on you, did they?"

"Only my name and address, and they wasn't quite sure about them," I told him.

"I'm glad of that," he said, "because I've got a job I want you to do for me. Earning an honest penny ought to appeal to you."

"It don't," I answered. "However, I'll turn a trick for you if I can, and no salary asked."

"Thanks," he said, walking up and down the room and looking as worried as a prosecuting attorney does when his star witness is gumming up the evidence. "I'm up against a problem that I can't solve, and I need help."

"Shoot the yarn," sez I.

"The father of a friend of mine died about a month ago and left a will that wasn't anything like the will every one expected him to leave. By its terms his fortune was left in the hands of a young fellow named Edgar Rawlings, a sort of errand-running private secretary of his. His daughter is to receive three thousand dollars a year until her death, and then the estate goes to Rawlings. In case Rawlings dies first, it goes to the daughter."

"Leaves Edgar sitting pretty, don't it?" I

remarked, getting interested. "Looks like a frame-up."

"It is," he growled. "That's what makes me so sore. I'm satisfied it's a fake, but Miss Mitten won't allow the will to be contested. She says that if her father wanted it that way it will have to stand. But she's heartbroken, and that's the pitiful part of it. She and her father were always great pals, and naturally she can't become reconciled to his leaving Rawlings in charge of things and almost forgetting her."

"Why should you worry?" I asked, figuring that he was all worked up about something that didn't affect him a whole lot.

Miss Mitten and I are going to be married," he explained, "and I can't stand to see her unhappy."

"I see," I sez. "And that brings it up to me, as the fellow said when it was his turn to be shot. Just what am I expected to do?"

"I'd like for you to go down to Milltown, that's where the Mittens live, and nose around a while," he said. "Looking at things from a crook's standpoint, you may be able to figure out something. If you get into any trouble, or need any help, look up Judge Whitmore. He'll do anything in the world for Miss Mitten. Of course I'll furnish expense money."

"Fair enough," I agreed; "but forget the expense. I'll pick up a living along the way."

And that's how I happened to go to Milltown, which is one of these country towns often referred to as a nice quiet place to spend Sunday. Week days wasn't no wild whirl of fun and amusement, either, but being there strictly on business, I didn't mind.

I took along a lot of samples of the stuff they make picture frames out of and an order book. I was posing as an agent for enlarged crayon portraits. It's bad business to be in any place without some visible means of support, especially when you have a police record.

There are always two places in a country town where you can pick up the news—the pool room and the barber shop. If you can't find out what you want to know at either of those places, nobody in town knows it. You can give odds on that. I tried the barber shop first. Running true to form, the barber spills the whole Mitten sensation the first time I get shaved. Why shouldn't he? Didn't he have a victim in one who admitted he didn't know anything about it? Didn't he have the chance of a lifetime to spring the greatest piece of news since the war? You tell 'em.

And he knew just why Old Man Mitten had made such a crazy will. Yes, sir. He had figured it all out by himself. Edgar knew something wrong about the old man and made him sign the will as a price of silence. The boy sure was clever.

He told me that Edgar was about as popular about town as a Florida real estate man visiting in California. He had always been one of these meek, holier-than-thou sort of birds before Mitten's death, but since then he had grown a new set of feathers, drove a high-power machine, wore tailor-made clothes, and used a holder when he smoked cigarettes. He was sitting on the top of the world and sure was enjoying himself. Before that barber got my neck shaved I knew an awful lot about Edgar.

I hung around town a couple of weeks, playing a little pool and poker to pay expenses, and figuring on a way to trip up Mr. Edgar. When I had a plan all doped out that I thought would work I went to see Judge Whitmore, the man who Jack had told me to see if I needed any help.

Judges and me have never been what you might call bosom friends. Owing to the nature of our different pursuits of life, we invariably disagree, and when a judge says "guilty" it seems to mean so much more and carry so much more weight than when I say "not guilty."

This judge happened to be the exception that proves the rule. He was a prince. He must have weighed nearly three hundred pounds, and he had a way of looking at you, his eyes twinkling and the corners of his mouth raising a little, like he was going to laugh. He was as popular a man as there was in town.

"I'm taking orders for enlarged portraits done in crayon," I said after I'd told him

who I was. "I hate to leave without an order from one of the city's celebrities."

"It would take a pretty big canvas to do me justice," he smiled. "I hope orders is all you're taking."

"Absolutely," I grinned back at him, seeing that Jack had put him wise. "But let's not go into the details of our separate and distinct professions. Mine won't stand investigation, and maybe yours won't, so let's not take a chance."

"You may be nearer right than you think," he said. "What have you found out?"

"Not a whole lot, for sure," I told him. "Looks like an awful rough piece of work on Edgar's part. He did it too good. Amateurs always do. One of the witnesses who signed the will is driving a new car, and the other one has gone to California. From what I can learn, neither of them had enough jack to change a nickel before the old man died. I know a lawyer who could tear Edgar wide open on the witness stand."

"I know it looks bad," agreed the judge, looking worried. "But you mustn't overlook the fact that Mr. Mitten actually signed the will. We had the signature examined by some of the best hand-writing experts in the country, and they all agree that it is genuine. I'd give a whole lot to know just why he did it."

"Hand-writing experts," I snorted, picking up a letter he had signed just as I came in. Then I took a blank piece of paper and copied his signature.

"Ask your hand-writing experts who signed that," I suggested.

He studied my copy a while and then looked up at me sorter blank and astonished, like a fellow does when he picks up the wrong walnut-shell.

"Gosh," he said, rubbing the side of his face with his hand, "I didn't know it was so easy."

"If you think it's so easy, try it," I said, a little sore because he didn't recognize art when he saw it. "Give me credit."

He didn't say anything for a while—just sat there thinking, like a fellow will when an idea suddenly hits his brain and sticks.

"Why couldn't we write a will to suit ourselves?" he finally asked, looking like he had thought up something bright. "We could date it later than the other will, and you could sign Mitten's name to it. Then we'd find it accidentally among some of his papers, and our troubles would be over."

"We could do that, all right, but we couldn't put it over," I answered, beginning to see daylight. I had been wondering just how far the judge would go, and was relieved to know that the sky was the limit. "You boobs have admitted that Mr. Mitten didn't make a will. Nobody's talked about anything but that will since he died, and if I know my law right, a will has to have witnesses. How will you find two people in this town who will swear that they saw Mr. Mitten sign that will, and then forgot all about it, until you found it? We couldn't make a fairy story like that stick."

"Of course we couldn't," he said, wilting like a balloon when you stick a pin in it. "I spoke before I thought."

"Edgar might confess," I suggested, playing my ace.

"The sun might stop shining, but it won't," growled the judge.

"I meant a written confession," I said, "made and signed before a couple of men whose word wouldn't be doubted, like yourself, for instance, and some other good man."

The judge got what I was shooting at right away. He was smart. You didn't have to furnish him with a blue print and a ten-page letter of instructions when you wanted to tell him something.

"By George," he smiled, brightening up, "that plan could be put over all right."

"No reason why it couldn't," I said. "Of course I'd have to have one of Edgar's signatures to copy."

"I could get that," the judge said. "Henry Prudy, cashier of the bank, would lend me one of Edgar's canceled checks. And he would sign the confession as a witness, too."

"Edgar will be a surprised baby when you spring it on him," I grinned.

"No doubt," mused the judge. "He may have nerve enough to fight it, but he

wouldn't have a chance with a jury in this county, not if Henry and I swore that he signed the confession."

He began to look troubled again.

"What's bothering me," he went on, "is the possible chance that Mitten did make that will. I'd hate to send an innocent man to jail."

"You won't," I assured him.

"Maybe not," he said, thinking hard. "All my life I've contended that no possible excuse would justify a man giving false testimony on the stand. It's hard for me to get away from that, but I suppose Miss Mitten's happiness would justify it."

"You'll never get as far as the witness stand," I told him. "That bird who signed the fake will as a witness is going to sit up and take notice when he hears of Edgar's confession. He's going to figure that he's been double-crossed, and volunteer a little confession of his own. I wouldn't be surprised if the one in California sent a night letter telling us all about it. These amateur crooks are easily scared."

"I hadn't thought of that possibility," said the judge, looking relieved. "I'm willing to take a chance."

"Let's do it quick!" I exclaimed. "Some of these people I've been taking orders from want to know why their pictures ain't here."

Well, the judge did his stuff the next night and got away with it without a struggle. Edgar tried to put up a bluff, but he was shy on nerve, and when the judge bluffed back by telling him that his witnesses had also confessed, he couldn't stand the suspense. He 'fessed up and begged for mercy. The judge didn't want to take the matter to law because of the foolish scruples he had about swearing to things that weren't exactly the truth, so he took Edgar to the midnight train and bid him farewell.

The next day I shoved my picture-frame samples under the bed in my room at the hotel, packed my grip and went to wish Judge Whitmore good-by.

"How much do we owe you for your trouble?" he asked after we'd talked a while about how smart we'd been.

"Not a cent," I answered, shaking hands with him and moving toward the door. "You help me to settle a grudge against a guy I hate, and that's pay enough."

"I don't understand," said the judge, looking puzzled.

"Naturally you wouldn't," I told him. "Good-by, judge. I hope we'll never meet when you're sitting on the bench."

"That goes two ways," grinned the judge.

Maybe I ought to have told him, but I didn't. It might have got a friend of mine in bad. It's this way: I've got a friend in New York that's a lawyer, and once in a while I do a little pen work for him. He drew up a will for a fellow once, and after he'd done all the work the guy wouldn't pay him. Knew he couldn't holler, you understand. When he didn't get his money I didn't get mine. I didn't know at the time that Edgar was the man who had the will made, but I knew, of course, that I had signed Mr. Mitten's name to it!

A PLOT AGAINST DETECTIVES

A PLOT to trap detectives of the Narcotic Division and then kill them in an alleged rendezvous of drug venders in East Houston street, New York City, has been revealed by the police following the arrest of a man near the place recently.

An anonymous letter was sent to the officers of the Narcotic Division, "tipping off" the detectives that if they would raid the East Houston street place they would find a large quantity of drugs and capture the leaders of a band of drug venders who had been supplying actors and actresses in the White Light district.

Unaware of this letter, Policeman Stankowitz learned of the place and raided it. Twenty-eight "decks" of heroin and two fully loaded revolvers were found in a closet, but the occupants were not found. The finding of the two revolvers led the police to believe that the occupants of the place had prepared a real death plot.

Just Within the Law

By JOE BURKE

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

"WAS Red in de game?" Cutler asked to draw the crook into a confession as to who killed Steve, his brother.

"Sure he was," said Gypsy Dorr. He had remained silent until now, but the whisky had done its work of loosening his tongue. "De Eel, Lefty, Red an' I done de job. Kelly sent a detective a warnin' letter, an' Cutler—dat was de plain-clothesy's name—got after us all th' harder. Den de boss gives us de high-sign, an' we finishes mister dick. Not a chance t' get anythin' on us, Listener. Kell's de whole works in dis ward, an' de judges eat out o' his hand. Dat's de bunch youse wid now, bo. Live ones."

At last! Harry Cutler, at that moment, wanted to cry to Heaven for advice. The Good Book says "thou shalt not kill." The statutes of the government quote a similar passage. They punish the killer of the killed. That is the law on earth and beyond the grave. Cutler's mind was made up quickly. He was an officer, sworn to uphold the law, and his word was also pledged to Chief Taylor that he would only shoot in self-defence.

He rose slowly and shoved his chair to the wall. He would herd the three gangsters and drive them to the street at the point of his revolver. It was a hazardous undertaking, but he had the courage to try it.

Tense and grim, his right hand moved, then stopped in its flight. He stared. Fate plays queer pranks. This time it was in the form of impending tragedy. For at that moment the door was thrown violently open, and framed in the doorway stood Red Shannon!

The gang leader swept the room with a lowering glance. His three half-drunken puppets rose as one and staggered to greet him. With an oath he hurled them aside, the Eel splintering a rickety chair in his fall, the other two crashing against the wall, the impact rattling the glasses on the table. Then Red confronted Harry Cutler across the table.

"Who de devil are you?" he growled, his hairy, ham-like hands working nervously. He was a colossal brute with fiery red hair. Under the dim light of the single hanging lamp his bloodshot eyes bespoke the lust to kill.

"Who do you tink I am—eh?" snarled the impostor, to bluff it through if possible. "Don't youse know me? If you are Red Shannon den youse know de Listener."

Watchful, alert, he waited the result of his bluff. Even though his gaze never strayed from the gang leader's every move, he was conscious of the sea of sinister faces that filled the doorway behind the red-headed yegg. That he really was Red Shannon Cutler had no doubt. The Eel had mumbled the name "Red" on his entry. His description also tallied with that on the index card at headquarters. Cutler could reason it all out now. Black Mike's evil, repellent face, which was foremost in the midst of the pack jamming the doorway, solved the problem of the gang leader's untimely arrival. Nettled by the humiliation that he was forced to endure before the three gangsters, while under the frowning bore of Cutler's revolver a short time be-

fore, he had sent a crook to Red's hide-out, informing him of the "Listener's" presence, and maliciously hopeful that the lightning gun-thrower would prove to be spurious.

Red Shannon's bleary eyes were baleful. His huge right hand slid slowly from the table-top. The Eel, Lefty and Gypsy Dorr, fully conscious to the fact that something was amiss, were taking up positions of advantage in different parts of the little room. Then the big yegg spoke.

"Yes-s-s," he sibilated, "I'm Red Shannon, but you are *not* Listener Mullen! Y're a cursed elbow from headquarters! Get him, fellers!" he bellowed. "Don't let him get away! Kill der blasted bull!"

The exposure was a disappointment to Cutler's hopes. Guns were gripped in every hand. Red was the first to fire. And that first shot was his last. A wicked spurt of flame cleared the table-top, trailing in the twin roars of the two firearms. Red Shannon gasped once, buckled at the knees, then crashed to the floor, his smoking revolver still clutched in his stiffening fingers. One murderer had paid.

"One side," snapped Cutler. "You, Eel and Dorr, march ahead of me! Back, you dogs! That's right." The gangsters had parted sullenly, but still dangerous.

The confessed living murderers of his brother sidled towards the door. In the open they did not relish shooting it out with a man that could beat Red Shannon throwing a gun. Their eyes met in mute understanding. At the door they whirled, their guns popping hell's fire and lead.

"Rush him!" screamed the Eel.

Harry Cutler sprang for cover at the volley, and was now peering over the top from behind Black Mike's heavy roll-top desk.

"He croaked Red," shrilly yelled the dead leader's lieutenant. "Let's get him before de bulls come, or he'll jam de whole works. Take that!" he snarled, blazing at the officer's head peering over the desk top.

Back came a shot and the curse was scorching his lips when he died. Two had paid the penalty.

That stayed the onslaught for a spell. A few leaden pellets had embedded themselves in the seasoned, polished oak, and, outside of marring the finished surface, did little or no damage.

That he was trapped, the mounted policeman had no doubt. During his stay in the room his eyes had searched every nook and cranny for a second exit. None were visible, although he felt certain that there must be some secret means to make a get-away in a rendezvous of its kind.

He knew that gunmen were usually pretty safe from police interference in their underground warrens. Black Mike's den of vice was on the water front, and the hour was nearing the gray dawn of another day. The rumbling of vehicles transporting products from and to the numerous industries partly drowned the noise of the shooting. A hasty inventory of his ammunition showed that his pocket contained a whole chip, while there were still three shots left in his automatic. He would wait for their next move, then fight his way out, if he must. But Lefty and Gypsy Dorr would accompany him, or they would join their dead pards on the floor.

A movement among his attackers brought his head above the desk again. Lefty was in the foreground and was speaking.

"C'mon out o' dere an' call it off," he parleyed. "If we is wrong an' youse ain't an elbow, what d' ya wanta get sore fer? C'mon out an' wet up."

"Come on and get me," defied Cutler, his finger trembling on the gun trigger. He knew it was a ruse. Were he to expose himself his body would be a target for scores of bullets. Where was Gypsy Dorr?

Lefty had backed to the door again. Evidently he was aware that his stratagem had failed. His next move puzzled the trapped policeman.

"C'mon in, fellers, an' get a shot o' shine," Lefty called to the pack. "If dat nut wants ter stay dere, ter the deuce wid him."

"Naw," growled one; "let's flop out here."

Sergeant Cutler watched them withdraw from view.

Bracing himself for what he was sure he would encounter, he moved softly to the corner of his improvised haven. A sound like the scratching of a rat arrested his

movement. He listened intently and soon traced its source over his head. His service revolver at ready, he crouched down again, his eyes glued on a square portion of the ceiling which was gingerly rising!

Inch by inch the trapdoor was raised. A dim light from the room above poured through the aperture. As the Canadian policeman watched the dull gleam was mottled by a human visage—a malignant, cruel face.

"Gypsy Dorr," was his mental comment. He could never forget the loathsome, swarthy countenance of the Romany half-breed who vaunted so boldly of the part that he played in the murder of the detective.

Then the head was withdrawn, a hand supplanted it, and in those clinched digits was a revolver.

Both guns roared in the fraction of an instant. The weapon above clattered to the floor. Following it a close second was the body of its owner, Gypsy Dorr. He was not dead, only stunned by a creasing shot and the fall. Then pandemonium broke loose. With a roar, and guns belching, the gang charged.

Lefty screamed as a bullet from Cutler's revolver struck him. He coughed, clawed wildly, then sprawled over the swivel chair before the desk, carrying it to the floor with him, then lay still. Three had paid.

Black Mike was the next to feel the sting of the avenger's bullet. He also was only creased. Then the Canadian policeman played his trump card.

Gypsy Dorr had recovered consciousness, and Cutler dragged him to his feet. Handcuffs clicked. He was securely manacled, his hands behind.

"March," gritted his captor, his hand gripping Dorr's automatic, which was protruding from beneath the man's armpit. Cutler's hand was holding Dorr's captured weapon, which he was sinking into his spine.

As the Romany yegg and the trooper sergeant emerged in view the crooks fell back. Guns were lowered, as it was plainly seen that their confederate was to be used as a human shield in the policeman's escape from the trap. Growling and sullen and cowed by the death-dealing gun in the hand of a man who knew how to use it, they slowly receded.

At the top of the flight of stairs which led from the saloon to the street, Cutler halted and looked down on the frustrated gangsters. Over the shoulder of his prisoner he hurled his final warning:

"You coyotes keep your feet on the floor. Mind, now. I've got a few more slugs left, and my finger is itching to send a few more of your breed to the devil, where you belong. The first man who attempts to follow me I'll plug, and I'll kill this half-breed skunk also."

The policeman of the wilds flung open the door.

"March!" he ordered crisply.

Then they vanished in the haze of the gray dawn.

CHAPTER SIX

"WHERE do you live?" Cutler demanded of his prisoner as they were rounding the corner of the next block, out of sight of Black Mike's saloon.

"Third house down de next block," was the sullen response. "Why?"

"Because we're going there."

"Ain't y' gonna take me in?" queried Gypsy Dorr, puzzled at his captor's intention and relieved at the thought that there still might be a chance to outwit—or kill—the hated dick and escape.

"When I get around to it," said Cutler, "I'll put you in the jug."

Before a tumbled-down rookery, whose weather-beaten clapboards were warped and destitute of paint, the gangster stopped.

"Here," he said briefly.

They entered a foreboding-looking hallway and began to ascend the stairs. As the hour was early none of the other occupants were astir, so they reached the upper floor without encountering any one.

"Now, Dorr," began the Northwest Mounted Policeman, "you and I are going to have a talk."

They were seated in the crook's room, a foul-smelling abode which was furnished

with an old-fashioned bed, two crippled chairs, and a few other commodities that were in harmony with the squalid place. Cutler had removed the handcuffs after frisking Dorr for hidden weapons.

"Whatcha wanta know?" sullenly asked the crook.

He was rubbing his wrists and casting furtive glances at the door.

"Don't expect any help from that quarter," sneered Cutler. "I locked that door, and you heard what I told your pards in Black Mike's. Now, you listen; if you want to save your cowardly neck, you'll tell me the truth. Was it Martin Kelly who ordered you and the three men I shot to murder Detective Steve Cutler? Was it? Tell me the truth, or as sure as there's a just God in heaven I'll send you to the electric chair for the crime!"

Gypsy Dorr's face took on a greenish hue at mention of the chair. He shifted uneasily and mopped his forehead with a dirty handkerchief. His face twitched and his whole body was flying signals of distress. The policeman knew the symptoms and grimly watched the sufferer. The crook's eyes then strayed to the closed window.

"Warm? Then open it," Cutler said stoically.

Dorr arose and staggered to the only means of light and ventilation in the stuffy room, a window looking out on the back wall of a cement garage and a débris-strewed yard below. He threw the sash open, and for an instant he gazed down on the squalor below, then turning to Cutler, he blurted out.

"Fer Gawd's sake let me get a shot! I gotta dope gun an'——"

"Get it," allowed his captor.

With trembling hands the Romany yegg burrowed under a pillow on the bed and brought forth the "gun" and "shot." Removing a smoky chimney from an oil lamp on a shelf, he lit it and began to prepare the narcotic stimulant.

Setting on the windowsill the tarnished spoonful of water which he had heated over the flame, he was in the act of dropping a white tablet into the warm fluid when his wrist was grasped in a grip of steel.

"You can't have that till you answer my question, Dorr," said the cold voice of the officer who had been watching the gunman's every move and biding his time to interpose when the time was ripe.

With a cry like a wounded beast the sufferer turned to the Canadian policeman.

"No! No!" he cried wildly as Cutler relieved him of the dope. "I'll tell y' all! Don't take it away! Don't——"

His entreaty ended in a whining moan. The policeman tossed the "gun" and "shot" through the open window.

His eyes bloodshot, licking his dry lips as every nerve in his body cried out their suffering, Dorr told his story.

"Honest" Martin Kelly was the man higher up. He protected the gang's interest under the guise of philanthropy. He was their "fence." He was the leader of a "dope ring." The reason he had Detective Steve Cutler murdered was because the officer was slowly tightening a web of evidence around him and his henchmen and inevitable exposure was near.

"Dat's all," whimpered Gypsy Dorr. He again stood before the open window. His glassy, red-tinted eyes were again glued on the filthy débris three stories below. "De Eel," he mumbled over his shoulder, "Red, Lefty an' I done de job. They are bumped off, an' dere is only Kell an' me t' sizzle. Kell kin take his dose if he likes, but Gypsy Dorr——"

Cutler sprang, but too late, as he dove out the window. The body of the confessed murderer turned once in the air, then crashed to the littered ground below, where it lay a broken, inert mass. Four had paid for their crime.

"Honest" Martin Kelly yawned and opened his eyes as the twin bells of the telephone jingled. Lazily he snapped on the wall switch, flooding the room with light. Arising, he drew on a bathrobe, slipped his feet into a pair of felt slippers and shuffled over to the disturber of his repose.

"Ah, yes," he scowled, but his voice was low and tender to the ears of the hotel clerk on the other end of the line; "some poor unfortunate who is seeking my advice and

aid. Send him up, Mr. Felt; I'll see him at once."

Muttering, he drew up the window shade and switched off the light. Glancing at the common alarm clock on the mantelpiece, he noted the hour was seven-thirty.

"Who the devil can it be at this unconventional hour?" he thought. Raising a window, he inhaled deep-chested breaths of the city's mixed oxygen—smoke and grime. Far below on the busy street he watched the early throng. The piping voice of a youthful news vender rose above the din of the rumbling trucks and clanging of street cars. He leaned forward to catch what he said.

"Pipor! *Globe, Record* an' *Sun!*" he cried shrilly. "Buy a pipor. Full account of de shootin'. Read all about——"

A knock on the door interrupted. Crossing the room, he threw it open, stared, then stepped back. The early visitor confronting him was a stranger.

"Come in, my good man," invited "Honest" Martin Kelly, his fatherly smile in evidence. "What can I do to help you?"

The "good man" slouched inside, closing the door behind him. Although his early caller was a stranger, Martin Kelly saw at a glance that his whole being bespoke the underworld. Waving his visitor to a chair, the hypocrite seated himself before a cheap, flat-top desk, on which stood a typewriter.

"Well, my man, what's your name, and what can I do for you?" Kelly beamed, leaning forward. He tapped his finger-tips together and rocked his body slowly.

His visitor, who was sitting on the edge of his chair, growled and pushed forward his scowling visage.

"Can dat hallelujah chatter, Kell; I'm here on business. I ain't got all day, so let's get together."

Martin Kelly's benevolent mask dropped from his face like a veil. His lips set in cruel lines and his eyes gleamed like a viper's. His hand moved slowly to a drawer in his desk as his reptilian glance bored the man before him. When he spoke his tone was cold—frigid, like a dash of icy spray.

"You get out of this room and be quick about it. You've made a mistake. I don't care to do any business with you. Get out!"

The other chuckled, then arose, but not to leave.

"Red Shannon sent me," he retorted. "I'm Listener Mullen."

CHAPTER SEVEN

"WELL, Mullen," Martin Kelly was saying a short while later after Harry Cutler had related the drunken chauffeur incident, "if what you say is straight, you've hit onto the biggest haul in this burg. And we're in luck, too; I happen to have a speaking acquaintance with Major Brodrick, the man who fired his chauffeur."

"What's dis Brodrick guy's business?" asked Cutler.

"Didn't the discharged chauffeur tell you?"

There was a tinge of distrust in the interpellation.

"Naw," growled Cutler. "He was too pickled to spill everythin'. Whatcha tink I asked y' fer if he tol' me—eh?"

"Oh, all right, Mullen," said Kelly, reaching for the desk telephone, "but one in my standing must be careful at all times. Major Brodrick is a stock broker, and his hobby is collecting rare stones and antiques. As his former chauffeur told you, there must be rare stones and jewelry worth a king's ransom in his safe. He's an early riser, so I'll call him up and land you the job."

"Notin' doin' dat way, Kell," interrupted Cutler. He arose and swaggered over to the desk. "Y' write him a letter, an' put over de out-o'-work an' flock-o'-kids stuff. He'll fall for dat better when I do de weeps when he's readin' it. Savy?"

"As you like," Kelly complied, pushing back the phone. He selected a sheet of writing paper, picked up a pen and dipped it in the inkwell, then poised it in readiness to write.

Again his intentions were stayed. The Canadian policeman growled:

"Aw, why de devil don' ya do tings right? What's dat typewriter dere fer—an ornament? Pound it off on dat, Kell; it'll look better. I'll tell yer what t' write."

"You're a queer crook, Listener," smiled "Honest" Martin, laying aside the pen and shifting his chair before the typewriter. When ready to begin he looked up at Cutler. "Let's hear it."

The policeman cleared his throat and dictated:

"Dis will introduce John Martin. He is down an' out an' wants a job of any kind. He is kind t' animals an' is a good chauffeur. He would be willin' t' work fer his keeps, but he's got a family t' support."

He turned away and looked out the window as Kelly clicked off his epistle.

When the clicking stopped Cutler turned again to Kelly, who was looking up at him inquiringly.

"Dat's all," he grunted. "Y' can put anyting else in ye wanna."

"Honest" Martin resumed his clicking for several seconds more. Stopping at last, he removed the sheet of paper from the platen. Scanning it hastily, he nodded a mute approval; then with a flourish he affixed his signature at the bottom with pen and ink.

"Look it over, Mullen; then I'll order breakfast."

The Canadian trooper took the letter from his hand and walked to the window.

"Don't order no chuck fer me," he flung over his shoulder. "Wait a minute; I want ya t' put his bird's monniker on an envelope."

If Martin Kelly could have seen the policeman's face as he perused the typed sheet which he held before him, he would have given little thought to his belated breakfast. Cutler's broad back was towards him. Once he thought he heard a smothered curse from the motionless figure. As he looked in Cutler's direction that individual turned slowly and met the crook's gaze.

"Honest" Martin Kelly blinked and leaned forward. The figure who was now advancing towards him was not the insolent, snarling crook who he admitted to his room a short time previously.

His form was erect, his head thrown back. Instead of the twisted, sneering mouth, one of grim-set lines supplanted it. His eyes were barren of luster—like cold, unpolished steel.

"Martin Kelly," Cutler began, his voice quivering with fury, "you've reached the end of your rope. You murderer! You parasite! You who have cloaked yourself with respectability by acting the philanthropist, while all the time you've been the brains and guiding hand of a gang of yeggs and cut-throats! God!" he added, his stalwart body trembling, his clenched hands crushing the typewritten sheets which he held. "There's no word degrading enough for you! But your career of hypocrisy is over! Your hirelings, who murdered Detective Steve Cutler, are answering for their dastardly crime before a higher tribunal than man's. I ought to send you to join them, but I've given my word, so the law of the land will make you pay."

Kelly, who was now staring, mouth agape, eyes rolling up with terror, gasped wildly.

"It's a lie! A d—— lie! You say that Red, the Eel, Lefty and Gypsy are—are dead? I—I don't know you, but whoever you are, you can't prove anything! They are dead, and you've got no proof."

Kelly pulled himself together and made a feeble attempt to sneer. Then, as Cutler stepped back, the man at bay struggled to his feet and resorted to bluster.

"You get out of here!" He was swaying and gesturing drunkenly. "Go to the police and show your evidence! Go! Why, you fool, you ain't got a thing on me, nor have any of the numskulls in headquarters! Who are you and what the devil brings you here? Get out before I have you pitched headlong into the gutter."

The Canadian trooper's anger had subsided, but a smoldering volcano of vengeance was in his heart. He carefully smoothed out the crushed papers in his hand, all the while watching Kelly with his cold eyes. When he spoke again his voice rang.

"It is not a lie, Kelly," he said crisply. "Yes, your tools are dead. I killed three. One killed himself. I will get out now, and you're going with me. I don't need your

dead puppets to give evidence against you; I got all I want here!"

Harry Cutler held out before Martin Kelly two typewritten sheets of paper. One was the letter which was typed to Major Brodrick, the other was the warning epistle which Chief Taylor found among the effects of the slain detective—Steve Cutler!

Kelly staggered against the desk. Cutler was holding the second sheet of paper before his eyes. The black-typed words burned into his brain like a branding-iron. Who was this man that knew so much? What damning evidence was on those two slips of paper that would fasten the crime of murder on him? There still was a chance. He would make this intruder show his hand.

He gripped the edge of the desk as he tried to speak, but no sound was forthcoming. With a beast-like snarl he whirled and turned again in an instant. Like the falcon unhooded he craned his head forward. His hand followed, and in it was a revolver.

The policeman saw and sprang as Kelly pulled the trigger. There was no sound except the dry metallic click of a misfire. Then they closed in a deadly embrace.

Over the floor rolled the struggling men, chairs and other furniture crashing. Kelly still retained the revolver, which Cutler was vainly endeavoring to wrest from his grasp. The trapped master-mind of the crook was breathing laboriously and fighting with maniacal fury. Then they broke and rolled apart.

Kelly was on his feet like a flash of forked lightning.

"I'll fix you now, you cursed meddler!" he roared. He raised his revolver and again pulled the trigger.

Dual roars and stabbing flashes was the termination of the murderer's action. "Honest" Martin Kelly swayed, his eyes rolling horribly. With a last mighty effort he tried to raise the revolver, which was hanging limply in his fast stiffening fingers, but it fell to the floor with a loud clatter. He staggered a few steps, mumbled a curse, then pitched forward and lay stiff. Five had paid.

The Canadian policeman had fired from his prone position on the floor.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE name of Harry Cutler was an open sesame to Chief Taylor's private sanctum an hour or so later. He laid his suitcase on the floor, then dropped into a chair beside the desk.

"Well, Cutler," began Taylor, after casting into a cuspidor an unlit cigar which he had been chewing, "you did your work well."

His manner was neither cordial nor abrupt. He spoke almost mechanically, as though he was speaking a formula.

"Just within the law, was it not?"

The trooper's tone was easy, but to the point.

"Sure. If we gave you another twenty-four hours you'd have the undertakers working overtime. Tell me how you worked it and how you got the goods on Kelly."

Cutler rolled and lit a cigarette, then delved into his pocket, bringing forth the two letters. These he placed on the desk before Taylor.

"Look 'em over."

The grizzly detective head grunted as he adjusted his reading glasses. Spreading the typed sheets side by side, he studied them critically. The sergeant of the Mounted smoked in silence. Five minutes passed; then the chief looked up.

"Nope," he said shortly. "What is it that gave Kelly away?"

"The small k's."

"K's?"

"Sure," grinned Cutler. "Let me show you."

Pulling his chair closer, Cutler began to explain.

"The warning letter which my late brother received has words which contains small k's. Read: take—keep—kale and knife. The letter that Kelly wrote to Major Brodrick, which was dictated by me, also has written in it four words with the small k in them. Read: kind, kind again, works

and keeps. Now, chief," he finished, looking up into the veteran's face, "if you'll note closely you'll find that the upper angle line of the k is missing! A defect or an accident; anyway, that line of the k don't register."

Chief Taylor dragged at his bristly mustache as he studied the flaw. When he looked up his seamy old face was wreathed in smiles.

"That's the time my department pulled a bone, Cutler. I guess I'm getting old, too. But tell me how you pulled off the other stuff."

The Canadian trooper eased himself back in his chair again, his fingers interlaced across his waistcoat.

"Not a 'bone,' " he smiled, "just an oversight. That was my trump card. When I discovered the flaw in the type I then tried to reason out a way to reach the man higher up. I felt sure that the letter wasn't written by any of those illiterate crooks, so I found a way to get to the writer through them.

"In Flanders a soldier who was a member of my company was dying. His name was John Martin. Where he enlisted I couldn't say. He was sent from a replacement division with many others to fill up our thinned ranks. He was a rough sort, but a brave soldier. He beckoned to me and I went to his side. He told me about his life. He was known in the Philadelphia underworld as Listener Martin, a safe robber. His method was his deft fingers and keen ears. Why he told me is a mystery, unless it was a case of guilty conscience. He told me how he met a Boston gang leader named Red Shannon, mentioned Martin Kelly and then died.

"The chauffeur incident was a tableau I witnessed outside of the North Station when I reached the city. A private automobile was pulled up to the curb and a tall, military-looking man was having sharp words with a chap who was dressed like a chauffeur. The latter was drunk. A police officer came on the scene, heard the story, then arrested the intoxicated driver. After he had sent his prisoner away in the wagon I made known that I was a member of the Canadian police and asked him about the trouble. Then I learned who the gentleman was, and that is how I used his name for a bait. That's the story, sir, and now I'm off."

He arose and picked up his suit-case. Chief Taylor arose likewise. Both men looked into each other's eyes. Then Taylor spoke.

"Sergeant," he said with a show of feeling, "your brother was one of my best men. He died in discharge of his duty. You live, and I am proud to say that you are his equal. His place is vacant. Will you fill it?"

Harry Cutler shook his head slowly. He swallowed hard as a lump rose in his throat.

"Thank you, chief, but I must refuse. My duty is done here. Back home in Portage La Prairie there is a little girl waiting for my return. We are to be married. Good-by, sir."

His heels clicked together as he raised his right hand to his hat in salute. Then he turned and walked from the office.

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READ

"THE CURSE OF NADIR"

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A Thorn in His Flesh

By MERRITT L. ALLEN

CHIEF YATES was proud as he stood before the mirror in his private office at headquarters. He carefully inspected the spotless blue uniform trimmed with gold which he wore. Fully satisfied with himself, he passed haughtily through the hallway from his office to the street.

Outside, he paused for a moment to gaze out upon the wide expanse of the Gulf of Mexico, for Dunedin was a tourist town of Florida. Already the cold blasts of the North were driving Northern people to a warmer climate. As he stood there he wondered where he would take his noonday lunch. The peacock spirit within his soul decided him to dine at the Pennflora, for this would take him through Williams Park, which was always crowded with people. As he made his way along the streets, with shoulders thrown back and eyes looking straight ahead, he was conscious of many heads turned his way. Yates stopped for a moment in the park to watch a group of men pitching horseshoes. He liked the game, but of course it was beneath his dignity to play such a common sport now that he had been made chief of the police.

"How are yuh, chief?"

The suggestion of a frown gathered between Chief Yates's eyes. He turned upon the speaker, whose voice he did not know. At one swift glance he recognized the speaker to be an adroit crook who had once made the town his stamping ground. But the confidence man was so clever that the police never could get evidence enough to convict him.

"Joe Myers!" he exclaimed, and then his face grew red with anger. "Have I got to kick you out of this town again?"

Joe Myers held up a restraining hand.

"I'm a new man, chief, and I'm going straight," he replied. "Let me congratulate you upon your rapid rise in the service."

Joe beamed, extending his right hand.

The chief hesitated for a moment and inspected the correctly attired man who addressed him. He looked stealthily around and then shook Joe's extended hand, wondering what crooked game he was concealing behind that smiling exterior.

"Joe, five years ago, when I was a plainclothesman, I had orders to run you out of town. And I did. We couldn't get the goods on you, but things quieted down considerably after you left," said the chief, assuming a friendly air, although he was getting more suspicious every moment.

Joe laughed in a disarming way.

"By Jove, chief, but you certainly do look the berries in that uniform. I always told my friends that you'd never be satisfied until you reached the top of the ladder. Come on over to a seat on a bench and tell me about it."

Chief Yates hesitated for a moment and, to draw the crook out, followed after Joe. The two found a bench which was sheltered from the rays of the sun by a mammoth palm tree. The chief was doubtful about Joe being a new man; in fact, he felt that the crook was up to mischief and humored him in the hope of learning what his plans were.

"I can't spare much time, Joe, for I'm on my way to lunch," he said. "Won't you tell me what you came back to town for?"

Joe turned sidewise on the bench and laid a hand upon the chief's coat sleeve.

"When the crowd thins out I'm on my way to the Mandarin Inn. Oh, boy! What

sirloin steaks they do have, and French-fried potatoes and coffee! You're hereby invited to dine with yours truly," parried Joe.

The chief laughed aloud to disarm Joe's suspicions and hastily accepted the invitation.

"Tell me all about your climbing the ladder of success. You know I'm going in business down here," said Joe.

The chief opened his mouth to speak, but he let it close with a snap and turned sharply upon the man beside him.

"You've got to show me. What do you mean by business?" he suddenly roared.

Joe reached in his pocket and produced a billfold, from which he extracted a slip of paper and handed it to the chief.

"Huh!" grunted the chief. "A certified check on a New York bank for two thousand dollars. What kind of business you going in?"

"Real estate."

"I thought you were going straight?" the chief said, laughing at his own joke.

Joe thought it best to laugh, too.

"You bet! I'm going to buy a swell five-passenger car, get a license from the City Hall, and then me for an honest living."

"If you're as clever a real estate man as you were in the confidence game you'll make good," grinned the chief, trying to flatter his vanity.

"That's a compliment, sir," said Joe, looking pleased.

"Joe, do you know you were a thorn in my flesh? I couldn't catch you in the old days, and that kept me from being promoted. But if you're sure you mean to behave, I guess I'll have to let you stay here."

"Thanks! Now tell me about yourself."

The chief crossed one leg over the other and started to stroke his clean-shaven chin.

"It was a hard pull to get ahead in the department. I struggled night and day. Only merit put me where I am. I'm not through yet; I've saved up a nice bit of coin, and I'm going to climb some more for an inspectorship."

"Good for you, chief!" Joe returned heartily, running the certified check through his fingers. "By the way, what's a good bank to deal with? I want to get this check cashed and buy my car this afternoon?"

"Well, the First National is my bank, but then the American Trust is good," replied the chief; then he thought grimly. "Now his plans are starting. I can't imagine what he's up to yet."

Joe stood up and said with easy familiarity, as he thought he had won the chief's good-will:

"Let's get down to the Inn and see if we can get a table."

They walked out of the park and down the main street, chatting and laughing over old times. The chief's pretended friendliness was well enacted. Two blocks down they were about to pass the First National Bank.

"Oh, I might as well get this check cashed now as later," Joe remarked, showing the certified check to the chief again. "Come on in with me. It won't take but a minute."

The chief followed him in the bank and up to the teller's window. Yates leaned against the grilling a short distance and kept his eye on Joe. The teller carefully examined the check which had been passed to him, and Joe assumed an indifferent air and turned toward the chief.

"This town sure has been growing—same as you, Mr. Yates."

The chief looked at the clerk and laughed.

"Ain't he the kidder, though?" he asked.

Then the chief's eyes became riveted on a mirror behind the paying teller, reflecting all his actions.

The clerk laughed and left the cage to examine a card in the bookkeeping section. Upon his return he counted out twenty one-hundred-dollar bills and passed them to Joe, feeling sure the man was responsible, as he was apparently a friend of the chief of police.

A few minutes later and the two were seated in a Chinese restaurant waiting for their steaks. The chief rubbed his hands together in anticipation and picked a bit of lint from his coat.

"Tell me, Joe, why you decided to go straight?" he purred persuasively.

Joe sipped the ice water which the waiter

had brought in. He thoughtfully picked up a fork and began to trace a pattern in the tablecloth with one of the tines.

"To tell you the truth, chief, I was kinda scared when you kicked me out of this town. And it rather hurt my feelings, too. I made up my mind then that never again would I have to admit that I was chased out of my city. It's been a hard fight, but worth while. I want to show you now what I'm good for."

"We've had some pretty slick articles here since your time, Joe, but we got the goods on them all. I don't want to puff you up, but you certainly were a thorn in my flesh, as I said a spell back."

The talk drifted into real estate, and then the steaks and French-fried potatoes came. Joe ate his meal deliberately and with a relish. He thought he had, with his flattery, completely subdued the chief, who sat opposite and ate without hardly raising his eyes from the plate. Then Joe ordered a package of cigarettes for himself and a quarter cigar for the chief.

They lingered there for nearly half an hour enjoying the smokes and the small talk which they exchanged. Finally Joe looked at his watch and exclaimed:

"If I'm going to look at some cars this afternoon I must get busy."

The chief arose with seeming reluctance.

"I sure enjoyed that steak. Next time the treat's on me," said he.

Joe laughed softly. They walked as far as headquarters together, and Joe raised his hand in farewell as the chief disappeared inside. His next move hardly signified that he was going into the real estate business in Dunedin. He walked up the street for a few blocks and hailed a taxi, which drove him to the railroad station, then went to the check room and exchanged a bit of cardboard for his suitcase. Next he paced up and down the platform, muttering to himself:

"A thorn in the flesh, a thorn in the flesh —'the next treat's on me.'"

Joe was nervous, but he smiled with relief a few minutes later when the northbound train came in. He followed the colored porter, who had taken his suitcase into the Pullman car. Soon he heard the compressed air signal for the train to start, and as it gathered speed and drew away from the city of Dunedin Joe's smile broadened. He reached into his side pocket and drew out a slip of paper. He ran it through his fingers lovingly. The slip of paper was a certified check on a New York bank. Joe slumped down into his seat and tried to imagine the look on Chief Yates's face when he found out that Joe Myers had endorsed a check bearing his forged signature for two thousand dollars.

But suddenly a hand reached over his shoulder and snatched the check away; then a pair of nippers clicked on Joe's wrists.

"Guess I've got you dead to rights, Joe," chuckled Chief Yates. "I couldn't believe your yarn, so I bluffed you along till you felt secure enough to show your hand. That forged check you cashed ought to fix you, but if it doesn't I reckon this one will. Come along, old man. We alight at the first station and take a train back to Dunedin, where I'll put you in the cooler."

MARKED BILLS TRAP BLACKMAILERS

DETECTIVES BOYLAN and Finnan of the West Thirtieth street station, New York City, arrested Mark Soroko and his wife, Nellie, of Roxbury, Mass., in the Pennsylvania Hotel. They charged them with extortion after they had seen Morris Schoenhut of 1406 Vyse avenue, The Bronx, hand Soroko $75 in marked bills. The detectives said Soroko and his wife tried to work the old badger game on Schoenhut.

Schoenhut told the police some time ago that Soroko had threatened him with death unless he paid $1,000. Schoenhut agreed to pay $400 and gave a note for $300, arranging to pay some more on the advice of the detectives. When he handed over the money the detectives made the arrest.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack." by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
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93 "By the Left Hand," by Hamilton Craigie.
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95 "The Trick of the Great Yen How," by William Hamilton Osborne.
96 "At Moriarity's," by Fred S. Shuey.
97 "The Lost Star of the Films," by Jack Bechdolt.
98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
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140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
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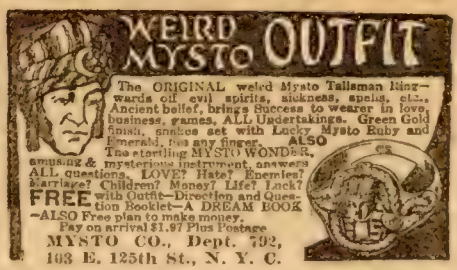
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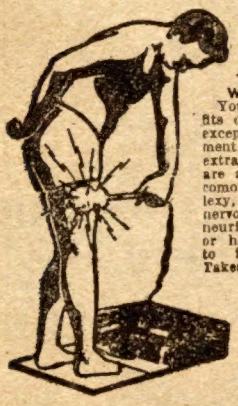

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